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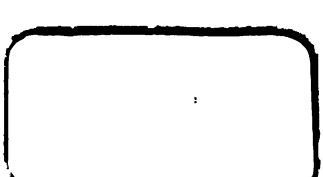

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SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS

VOLUME VI

MODERN ICELANDIC

PLAYS

ESTABLISHED BY
NIELS POULSON

MODERN ICELANDIC PLAYS

EYVIND OF THE HILLS

THE HRAUN FARM

BY

JÓHANN SIGURJÓNSSON

TRANSLATED BY

HENNINGE KROHN SCHANCHE

NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

BOTH volumes of the SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS selected to appear in 1916 are by natives of Iceland. They belong, however, to periods of time and to modes of writing remote from each other. Snorri Sturluson, the greatest of Icelandic historians, was born in 1179. His *Prose Edda*, the companion-piece of the present volume, is a Christian's account of Old Norse myths and poetic conceptions thus happily preserved as they were about to pass into oblivion. More than seven hundred years separate Jóhann Sigurjónsson from Snorri, and his work is in dramatic, not saga form. But even as in outward appearance modern Iceland is not unlike ancient Iceland, so the Icelandic writers of the present have marked kinship with the past. Despite many centuries of relative neglect, the old traditions lived on, cherished by scholars, until now, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Icelandic mind appears to be again renascent and creative. Einar Jónsson, the sculptor, has his counterpart in the domain of letters in such recent writers as Jónas Jónasson, Einar Hjörleifsson, Gudmundur Magnússon, Jónas Gudlaugsson, Gunnar Gunnarson, and Gudmundur Kamban, while every important fjord and valley can claim its own poet or novelist. As yet, the most distinguished performance of these younger authors is the play printed in this volume, *Eyvind of the Hills* (*Bjærg-Ejvind og hans Hustru*), by Jóhann Sigurjónsson. Among literary phenomena *Eyvind of the Hills* is a surprise, almost as though Iceland woke to find her naked mountains clothed in forest in a night.

Let Sigurjónsson tell his life story in his own words:[1] "I

[1] A letter dated November 7, 1912, to M. Leon Pineau, published in *La Revue* (Paris), July 1, 1914.

was born June 19, 1880, on a large farm in the northern part of Iceland. Our household numbered about twenty people. A broad stream, well stocked with salmon; on both sides of the river, rocks where thousands of eider-ducks had their nests; a view out over the Atlantic with high cliffs where sea-birds lived; lava-fields with unusual flowers; and in the distance blue mountains; such was the theatre where I acted my childhood pieces and where I wrote my first poems.

"When fourteen years old, I was sent to school at Reykjavik; but after pocketing the diploma of the upper class, my longing led me down to Copenhagen, where I chose the study of veterinary science. For three years I worked zealously at my studies and took all the preliminary examinations required, until suddenly I burned my ships and resolutely threw myself into the work of a playwright. At first one difficulty piled up after another. To begin with, I had to write in a language not my own. And then, what knowledge I had of human nature was limited to a most incomplete knowledge of myself and of a few college chums of my own age. Besides, it was not long before I had to concern myself about mere bread and butter.

"My first victory was an appreciative letter from Björnstjerne Björnson, wherein he promised warmly to recommend me to Gyldendal's, the great publishing house, which subsequently published my first play, *Dr. Rung*.

"My second victory was the acceptance by the Dagmar Theatre of *The Hraun Farm*. After the sometime directors of that theatre resigned, my play passed into the control of the Royal Theatre. Finally, I made my stage debut with *Eyvind of the Hills*, which was received with much enthusiasm both by press and public.

" In order to give as much actuality as possible to this drama, I traversed Iceland on foot from north to south and saw the places high up in the wild mountain waste where Eyvind lived with his wife. In my little garret in Copenhagen I had learned by my own experience the agony of loneliness."

Sigurjónsson's first drama, *Dr. Rung*, was written in Danish and published in 1905. This tragedy presents a young Copenhagen physician, Harold Rung, who is endeavoring to find a specific against tuberculosis. In order to test the effect of his serum, he decides to inoculate himself with the disease, and the pleading of Vilda, who loves him, fails to shake him from his purpose. The remedy proves a failure; the young scientist goes mad, giving Vilda poisoned grapes.

The Hraun Farm was published in Icelandic in 1908 (*Bóndinn á Hrauni*), and in Danish in 1912 (*Gaarden Hraun*). In rewriting the play for the Copenhagen stage, Sigurjónsson gave it a happy ending, thus changing a tragedy into a pleasant dramatic idyl of contemporary country life in Iceland. It is the familiar Scandinavian theme of the struggle of human love with love of the homestead. An old farmer, Sveinungi, is a veritable patriarch living at the edge of the " hraun," the lava-field. His only daughter, Ljot, he has destined for a sturdy neighbor's son, who will keep up the estate. But the girl falls in love with a young geologist and arouses her father's wrath, until the play ends with a scene in which Sveinungi is won over by Jorunn, his persuasive wife. The action is interrupted by an earthquake. The dialogue is well maintained and rises to heights of lyrical splendor. In point of dramatic effectiveness, *The Hraun Farm* may be regarded as only a preliminary study com-

pared to the next play, but its picture of pastoral Iceland makes it a fitting companion-piece to the greater drama in the present volume.

All other work of Sigurjónsson and the younger Icelandic dramatists pales beside *Eyvind of the Hills*, written in Danish and published in 1911.[1] The high sky of dramatic vision, the simple nobility of the characters portrayed, and the poetry of exalted passion raise above the ordinary this stern tragedy of natural lives in the wilderness. Eyvind is a man of heroic mould, who was forced by circumstances and hunger to the state of a common thief. When outlawed, he fled to the mountains. Seeking human companionship, he now descends into a valley where his identity is unknown and takes service with Halla, a rich young widow. She learns of his disguise only to fall in love with his real character. Persecuted by her brother-in-law, who wishes to marry her, and possessed by a great love, she insists on sharing the outlaw's lot and escapes with him to his old haunt in the mountains. Here they have two children, but she is obliged to sacrifice them both in turn, and to flee ever farther away. The last act finds the outlaw and his wife facing each other in a lonely hut, in the midst of a snowstorm which has shut off every avenue of sustenance. Although the beautiful reality of love is there, they are tormented by hunger and utter need into doubts and mutual reproaches, and at last seek death in the snow.

According to the historical facts upon which the story is based, a stray horse found its way to the hut of the starving couple, and so their lives were saved. Sigurjónsson used

[1] The English translation combines features of the original edition and a revised version printed in 1913. The play appeared also in Icelandic (*Fjalla-Eyvindur*) in 1912.

this ending when he rewrote the last scenes of the fourth act for Fru Dybvad, who played the part of Halla in Copenhagen, concluding with Halla's exclamation: "So there is then a God!" With *Eyvind*, as with *The Hraun Farm*, we can thus take our choice of two endings.

The Wish (*Ønsket*), Sigurjónsson's latest play, was published in 1915. Gloomy and terrible, but strong and restrained, it is built on a theme of seduction, remorse, and forgiveness in death, woven about the legendary figure of Galdra-Loftur, who lived in Iceland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It ends with an intensely dramatic scene in the old cathedral church at Hólar.

In addition to these four plays, Sigurjónsson has also written some beautiful verse.

In Mrs. Schanche, Sigurjónsson has a translator well fitted by artistic family traditions for the task. Herself of Norwegian descent, she has been for upward of thirty years a resident of Philadelphia. She has interpreted the pure idiom of Sigurjónsson's dialogue with real dramatic perception. In editing the volume the Publication Committee has had the valuable assistance of Hanna Astrup Larsen.

Georg Brandes, the veteran Danish critic, though not given to over optimism, has recognized Sigurjónsson's distinction, and the Icelander is acclaimed by the public who best know Ibsen and Strindberg, in Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Christiania. *Eyvind* has been successful also on the German stage. "Poetic talent of high order," says Brandes, "manifests itself in this new drama, with its seriousness, rugged force, and strong feeling. Few leading characters, but these with a most intense inner life; courage to confront the actual, and exceptional skill to depict it; material fully mastered and a corresponding confident

style!" And the French critic, Leon Pineau, concludes a long account of Sigurjónsson's production with the following estimate of *Eyvind of the Hills:* "In this drama there is no haze of fantasy, no bold and startling thesis, not even a new theory of art — nothing but poetry; not the poetry of charming and fallacious words, not that of lulling rhythm, nor of dazzling imagery which causes forgetfulness, but the sublimely powerful poetry which creates being of flesh and blood like ourselves — to whom Jóhann Sigurjónsson has given of his own soul."

Written by the author in a language not his by birth, this rock-ribbed tragedy of the strong and simple passions of Iceland lends itself peculiarly to international interpretation. It is with some curiosity, therefore, as well as satisfaction, that we introduce to English readers a young representative of the renaissance of Icelandic literature. How will he be judged by our countrymen, and what will be his place, if any, upon the American stage?

H. G. L.

New York, June 1, 1916.

EYVIND OF THE HILLS

[*BJÆRG-EJVIND OG HANS HUSTRU*]

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

1911

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HALLA (*pronounced Hadla*), *a well-to-do widow.*

KARI (*pronounced Kowri*), *overseer on Halla's farm.*

BJØRN, *Halla's brother-in-law, farmer and bailiff.*

ARNES, *a vagrant laborer.*

GUDFINNA, *an elderly, unmarried relative of the family.*

MAGNUS
ODDNY
SIGRID
A Shepherd Boy
} *Halla's servants.*

ARNGRIM, *a leper.*

A District Judge.

TOTA, *a child of three years.*

Peasants, peasant women, and farm-hands.

The action takes place in Iceland in the middle of the eighteenth century. The story of the two principal characters is founded on historical events. Halla's nature is moulded on a Danish woman's soul.

ACT I

A "badstofa" or servants' hall. Along each side-wall, a row of bedsteads with bright coverlets of knitted wool. Between the bedsteads, a narrow passageway. On the right, the entrance, which is reached by a staircase. On the left, opposite the entrance, a dormer-window with panes of bladder. On the right, over the bedsteads, a similar window. Long green blades of grass are visible through the panes. In the centre back a door opens into Halla's bed-chamber, which is separated from the "badstofa" by a thin board partition. A small table-leaf is attached by hinges to the partition. A copper train-oil lamp is fastened in the doorcase. Over the nearest bedsteads a cross-beam runs at a man's height from the floor; from this to the roof-tree is half of a man's height. Under the window stands a painted chest. Carved wooden boxes are pushed in under the bedsteads. The "badstofa" is old, the woodwork blackened by age and soot.

It is early spring, a late afternoon. Gudfinna and Oddny are sitting on the beds facing each other, Gudfinna mending shoes, Oddny putting patches on a coat. The Shepherd Boy is standing in the middle of the room, throwing a dart adorned with red cock's feathers. The costumes are old Icelandic.

The Boy (*throws his dart*). Ho! ho! I came pretty near hitting her that time!

Gudfinna. Hitting whom?

The Boy. Can't you see the little spider hanging down from the beam? I mean to shoot and break her thread.

Oddny. You are always up to some tomfoolery.

Gudfinna. Leave the poor creature in peace! It has done you no harm.

The Boy (*laughing*). Do you think she 'd break her legs if she should happen to fall down on the floor?

Gudfinna. I won't have it! Destroying a spider's web is sure to bring bad luck, and you 'll end by tearing the window-pane with your dart.

The Boy. Kari has told me of a man who broke a bow-string with one shot, and that from way off. (*Shoots.*)

Gudfinna. If you don't stop, you shall wear your shoes with the holes in them.

The Boy (*pulling the dart out of the beam*). Would you rather have me shoot your ear-locks?

Gudfinna. Are you crazy, lad? You might hit my eyes.

The Boy. I must have some kind of fun. I think I 'll have a shot at Oddny's plaits.

Oddny. If you dare!

The Boy (*laughing*). If I have bad luck, you will look at Kari with only one eye.

Oddny. You need a good spanking.

Gudfinna. Kari ought not to have given you that dart.

The Boy (*going to the spider, makes a fanning motion with his hand*). Up, old spinning-woman, if you bode good! Down, if you bode ill! Up, if you bode good! Down, if you bode ill!

Gudfinna. You are awfully hard on your shoes, worse than a grown man. I hope you don't walk on the sharpest stones just for fun?

Oddny. Of course he does!

The Boy. The sheep were so restless to-day. Some of them came near slipping away from me.

Oddny. If they had, you would n't be riding such a high horse now!

Gudfinna. Have they been bad to you, laddie? Do you never feel timid when you are alone so much?

The Boy. Sometimes I keep thinking what I should do if a mad bull came tearing down the mountains.

Gudfinna. Don't speak of them! They are the worst monsters in the world—except, perhaps, the skoffin.

The Boy. What is a skoffin?

Gudfinna. Don't you know that? When a rooster gets to be very old, he lays an egg, and if that 's hatched, it becomes a skoffin. It kills a man by just looking at him, and the only thing that can slay it is a church-blessed silver bullet. Indeed, there are many things you have to be careful of, my child. Are you not afraid of the outlaws? They 're not good, those fellows; they go about in skins with the wool on them and carry long sticks with ice-spurs, and that at midsummer. Have you ever seen anything of them?

The Boy. No, but yesterday I pretty near got scared. There came a man with a big bag under his arm. I did n't know him at first, but it was only Arnes.

Gudfinna. And what did he want of you?

The Boy. He asked me to show him the way to a spring. He was thirsty.

Gudfinna. You had better not have too much talk with him. (*Hands him the shoes.*) There! Now they will last till to-morrow anyway. (*Kneels down, pulls out a box, and examines its contents.*)

Enter Halla from her chamber.

Halla. It is time for the sheep to be milked.

The Boy. I am going now to drive them home. I was waiting for my shoes.

Halla. Have you seen anything of the cows to-day?

The Boy. No. (*To Oddny.*) When I get rich I 'll give you a cow's tail to tie up your plaits with.

Oddny. Hold your tongue! [*Exit the Boy.*

Halla (*smiling*). I heard him teasing you a while ago.

Oddny. He 's forever pestering me about Kari—as if I cared!

Halla (*with a little laugh*). Well, Sigrid does n't take such good care of Magnus's clothes as you of Kari's. [*Exit.*

Oddny (*is silent for a moment and looks at the door*). If I were a widow and owned a farm, the men would be noticing me too, even if I had been nothing but a poor orphan servant girl before I married—like some others.

Gudfinna (*rising, a pair of stockings in her hand*). What are you talking about? (*Pushes the box under the bed.*)

Oddny. Do you know who was Halla's father?

Gudfinna. That is what no one seems to know. Some would have it that he was a parson. (*She darns the stockings.*)

Oddny. Yes, or a vagabond. There were also some ugly whispers about a stain on her birth.

Gudfinna. You 'd better bridle your tongue!

Oddny. I am not so dull as you imagine. When Halla thinks no one is looking, she does n't take her eyes from Kari. And she has made him overseer; that seems queer to others besides me. Last Sunday at church some one asked me if there was anything between the widow and the "overseer."

Gudfinna. And what did you say?

Oddny. I told them that it was quite possible Halla had her lines out for him, but that I did not think Kari would swallow the fly, even if it had gold on its wings.

Gudfinna. Much good it did you, the gospel you heard in church! I am sorry for you, poor girl! You are crazy about a man who has neither eye nor ear for you, but that is no reason why you should be running around spreading gossip. Halla is not the kind of woman that is fond of men. There was never a harsh word between her and her

husband, God rest his soul, but there was not much love-making between them either. No, indeed!

Oddny. Well, what of that! He was a man up in years and had a fine farm.

Gudfinna. He was an upright and honest man, and Halla made him a good wife, my dear.

Oddny. Who doubts that? (*Silence.*) I don't know what ails Kari of late. Yesterday he flew into a rage when I asked him if he knew of a cure for freckles. I hope Halla has not become such a saint yet that one can't notice her freckles.

Enter Kari and Magnus.

Kari and Magnus. Good evening!

Gudfinna and Oddny. Good evening!

Oddny (*rising*). I am sitting on your bed, I believe.

Magnus (*throws off his cap*). Oddny, ask Sigrid to come here and pull off my stockings. (*Sits down.*) It feels good to sit down. [*Oddny goes reluctantly.*

Kari. Why is she so grumpy? She is not so cheerful a body as you are. I should like to have known you in your young days. I dare say you knew how to handle a rake.

Gudfinna (*straightening her back*). You may be sure. On dry ground, two lively fellows had all they could do to make ready for my rake.

Kari. And you were not afraid to tuck up your skirts, where the ground was low and marshy.

Gudfinna. Indeed not! Many a time I had water in my shoes.

Enter Sigrid and Oddny.

Magnus (*stretching his feet out on the floor*). Pull off my shoes! I'm so tired to-night I can't move.

Sigrid. It must be laziness that ails you, as usual. (*Kneels*

down.) How in the name of heaven did you manage to get so wet in this dry weather? I can wring the water out of your stockings.

Magnus. Kari wanted to jump the creek to make a short cut, and I fell in.

Oddny (*to Kari*). Aren't you wet, too?

Kari. No. (*Sits down.*)

Magnus. Kari skims over everything like a bird.

Kari. Every man has his gift. (*To Sigrid.*) You should see the rocks Magnus can lift.

Magnus. Well, it may be true that I am pretty strong, but I should like to see the man who could throw you in an honest *glima.*

Oddny. I know one whom Kari couldn't stand against.

Magnus. And who is that? (*Sigrid pulls at his stockings.*) There! There!

Oddny. Bjørn, Halla's brother-in-law.

Magnus. I should not be afraid to bet on Kari against him. (*To Sigrid.*) Give me the stockings! (*Dries his feet with the stocking legs.*)

(*Sigrid pulls out a chest, where she finds dry stockings.*)

Enter Halla.

Oddny. I don't think Kari would dare to try a fall with the bailiff.

Kari. If you were the prize, I should not dare to!

Gudfinna (*laughing*). There you got it!

(*Everybody laughs except Oddny.*)

Halla (*smiling*). Yet many have fought for less.

Magnus. I'm ready to make a wager with you, Oddny, that Kari would win.

Halla. It does not look as if the cows were coming

home to-night. Magnus, won't you go up the gorge and see if they are there, and I will send the boy down to the creek.

[*Exit Sigrid with the wet stockings.*

Magnus. Oh, why did I bother to change my stockings!

Halla. You can take a horse. (*A dog is heard barking.*) There! we shall have company.

Kari (*rising*). I'll run up there.

Halla. You have your trout nets to look after. I know Magnus won't mind.

Magnus. Confound those cows! Why can't they come home in time! (*Puts on his shoes.*)

(*Kari pulls out a small box from under the bed and begins to whittle teeth for a rake.*)

Arnes puts his head in at the door; he carries a large bag.

Arnes. Good evening! I did not want to trouble any one to come to the outside door. (*Drops his bag on the floor.*) Now Arnes is rich—there's gold sand in my bag.

Halla. I dare say there is.

Arnes. You people don't know what lies hidden in the hills. I have heard of a man who lost his way in Surt's Cave. For days he walked underground, and when at last he came up he had gold sand in his shoes.

Halla. What would you do if that were really gold in your bag?

Arnes. Then Arnes would do many things. You should help yourself to all your hands could hold, and as many times as you have given me shelter, and Arngrim the leper should also fill his fists. I know of no one else to whom I care to do good.

Gudfinna. And should I have nothing?

Arnes. I would give you new, long ear-locks of gold.

Magnus (*laughing*). Some little gift you 'd surely have for the bailiff — no?

Arnes. For him? Yes, if I could throw the sand into his eyes. (*Opens the bag and takes out a handful of Iceland moss.*) They are fine, these lichens, and taste good when you cook them in milk.

Gudfinna (*rising and muttering to herself*). The milk!

[*Exit.*

Arnes (*holding up a handful*). See how big they are.

Halla. Yes, they are fine.

Arnes (*patting the bag*). And it is well stuffed, too.

Enter the Boy.

The Boy. Now you can milk the sheep.

Halla. You are not through yet, poor boy. You will have to go down along the creek and look for the cows.

[*Exit Oddny.*

The Boy. I hope they 're not up to new tricks and begin to stay out nights. [*Exit.*

Halla (*calling after him*). Take a drink of milk in the pantry; the key is in the door.

(*Magnus rises slowly.*)

Arnes. Are you going to buy my bag?

Halla. If you make the price right.

Arnes. You ought to have it for nothing — you've given me shelter and good food so often. (*Lifts his foot.*) What I need most just now is to get something on my feet.

Halla. I don't think we shall quarrel about the price. (*To Magnus.*) Take it out into the kitchen.

[*Exit Magnus with the bag.*

Halla. Will you not sit down? I 'll go and find you a bite to eat. [*Exit.*

Arnes (*following her with his eyes*). That woman has a kind heart. (*Sits down.*) How long have you been working here on the farm?

Kari. This is my second year.

Arnes. And overseer already? Yes, some folks have luck. (*Leans toward him.*) As you may know, I haven't a very good name. I can't settle down very long at any one place, and it comes hard for me to be anybody's servant. You must surely have heard me spoken of as a thief?

Kari. People will say so many things.

Arnes (*passing his hand over his ears*). My ears are not marked yet, but somehow it sticks to you like dust—what people say—no matter whether it is true or not. Have you ever been the target for gossipy tales?

Kari (*slowly*). Not that I know of.

Arnes. Then you have it coming to you. Shall I tell you what they are saying about you in these parts?

Kari. Is it about me and Halla?

Arnes. I have heard that too, but this story is about yourself.

Kari. I would rather be spared listening to gossip.

Arnes. If I had been quite sure that it was nothing but gossip, I should not have opened my mouth about it.

Kari (*laughing coldly*). You are at least frank.

Arnes (*rising*). It is all the same to me, but if you have anything to hide, you had better keep your eyes and ears open, for you have an enemy, that much I can tell you.

Kari. I don't know that I have harmed any one around here.

Arnes. You live and fill your place. That is enough to make enemies.

Enter Halla with a wooden mug filled with porridge and milk. The lid is turned back and some meat, dried fish, and butter are placed upon it.

Halla. You get nothing but skimmed milk. I thought you would rather have that than wait until the cows had been milked. (*Lets down the table-leaf.*)

Arnes (*sits down and reaches for the mug*). God bless you, woman! I am used to having it on my knees. (*Pulls out his pocket-knife and eats.*)

Halla (*stops in front of Kari and looks at him*). You are working hard; there are drops of sweat on your forehead.

Kari. Are there? (*Wipes his forehead; looks up.*) Should you like to know your life beforehand? (*Stands up and raises both arms to the ceiling.*) I have lived where I could touch the roof over my head with my clenched fists, and I have lived where my eyes could not reach it. (*Sits down.*) Can you remember how few clothes I had when I came here?

Halla (*sitting down*). I can well remember the green knitted jerkin you wore—you have it yet—and your coat and brown breeches. (*Smiling.*) There was a big black patch on the left knee.

Kari. The rags on my back were all I had in the world, and now I own two new sets and even more underclothes. You deserve that I should put teeth of gold in your rake.

Halla (*smiling*). That rake would be too heavy for me.

Kari (*looking at Halla*). So many things come back to me to-night that I have not thought of before. You gave me leave to work in the smithy in my spare time instead of doing the wool-carding. You saw to it that I should be one of the men who gather the sheep down from the hills in the fall, because you knew I liked it.

Halla. That was only natural, since you are so swift of foot.

Kari. And for my bed you knitted a coverlet with seven colors in it. You have always been good to me.

Halla. Now you are getting far too grateful. (*To Arnes.*) Do you think you have enough food there, Arnes? I can get you some more, if you want it.

Arnes (*patting his stomach*). I don't even know if I can make room for the porridge.

Kari (*looking at Halla*). If I were to leave this place, I should miss you more than any other living being I have ever known. (*Rises, pushes the box under the bed.*)

Halla. I hope you will stay here for many years yet.

Kari. Nobody knows what the morrow may bring.

[*Exit.*

(*Halla follows Kari with her eyes. Silence.*)

Arnes (*puts the wooden mug on the table*). Now I give thanks for the meal. Will you let me lie in one of your barns to-night?

Halla. You would surely sleep better in a bed. You can lie with Magnus.

Arnes. I never sleep better than in old dry hay.

Enter Gudfinna.

Gudfinna. Is it true, Arnes, that you can tell what the birds are talking about?

Arnes. Do they say that?

Gudfinna. In olden times there were wise folks who understood all such things, but people nowadays are backward in that as in so many other ways. (*Sits down.*)

Halla (*smiling*). Yes, young people are not good for much, in your opinion.

Gudfinna. We need only think of the sagas. There ha
we men now like Skarphjedinn and Grettir Asmundsson
There are none such in these days.

Halla. When I was a child there was nothing I wishe
much as that I might have lived with Grettir in his bar

Arnes. Was it not eighteen years he was an outlaw?

Halla. Nineteen. He lived longer as an outlaw than an
one else has done. He lacked only one year to become fre

Arnes. He must have been a great man, but that bring
to my mind what the deper said the other day, when th
talk turned to the old sagas.

Halla. And what did he say?

Arnes (*Distance makes mountains blue and mort*
green).

Enter the Boy, running.

The Boy. The bailiff is coming on horseback.

Halla (*rising*). What can he want so late? Did you find
the cows?

The Boy. Yes, I met them coming home. Th in.

Halla. Gudfinna, you go and ask him to come in. (*Gud-*
finna rises.) You won't forget about the milk? [*Exit.*

Arnes (*rising*). Now I think I shall go and seek my bed. [*Exit Gudfinna.*

Halla (*smiling*). Don't you want to have a talk with the
bailiff?

Arnes. If I had found some dead sheep up in the hills
with his mark on their ears, I 'd gladly have told him so.

Halla. Sleep well!

(*Halla smooths her hair.*) [*Exit Arnes.*

Enter Bjørn, carrying a riding-whip with a silver-mounted handle and a leather lash; he wears riding-socks reaching above the knees.

Halla. Good evening!

Bjørn (*pointing to his feet*). I did not take off my socks. I see now that they are not quite clean.

Halla. Will you be seated? May I offer you anything?

Bjørn. No, thank you. I want nothing. (*Sits down.*) You know I have not far to come. The sorrel and I can make it in fifteen minutes, when we are in the humor.

Halla. How is everything at your place? Have you any news?

Bjørn. That depends on what you mean. Who was that I met in the hall? It was quite dark there.

Halla. It must have been Arnes.

Bjørn. Is he spending the night here?

Halla. Yes.

Bjørn. It is no concern of mine, but I doubt if my late brother would have sheltered men of his kind, and yet he had the name of being hospitable. (*Takes a snuff-box from his pocket.*)

Halla (*sitting down*). I know nothing wrong of Arnes, and I do know that he is grateful for what I can offer him.

Bjørn. I thought you had heard the common talk. His record is not of the best, I am sorry to say. I have been told that little things are apt to be missing where he has made his stay.

Halla. I would rather bear such a loss in silence than perhaps throw suspicion on an innocent man.

Bjørn. Finely thought! Yet some one must be the first to warn the unwary. (*Takes snuff.*) You must hear what happened to me not long ago. The boy lost two milch

sheep up in the hills. I was vexed that it should occur so early in the summer when they still had their wool, and therefore I sent one of my men to look for them. Near Red Peak he found tracks of the sheep and also the footprints of a large man. (*Lowering his voice.*) You could do me a good turn if you would give Arnes a pair of new shoes; I should pay for them, of course. He will not suspect anything, if you do it. Then you keep his old shoes for me.

Halla (*rising*). No, I will have nothing to do with that.

Bjørn. Then we shan't speak of it any more. I think I shall find out what I am after, nevertheless. (*He is silent.*)

Halla. You surely did n't come here to-night for Arnes's sake?

Bjørn. I did not. Was Kari at church last Sunday?

Halla. Why do you ask?

Bjørn. I know that he was there. (*Sits down.*) You are satisfied with him as an overseer?

Halla (*sits down*). In every way.

Bjørn. All the same, I advise you to get rid of him, the sooner the better.

Halla (*laughing*). I thank you for your kind advice.

Bjørn. My advice is not to be scorned, and besides, am I not your brother-in-law?

Halla. My sheep had to learn that to their cost, when they strayed in on your pastures, and you set your dogs on them.

Bjørn. Even though we have not always been as neighborly as I might wish, you must listen to me this time. I have always disliked Kari; I would never have hired that man. Believe me, there is something underhanded about him. Nobody knows him, and no one has heard of his people. It is as if he had shot up out of the ground. The

only thing you know about him is that his name is Kari, and you don't even know that.

Halla (*rising*). What are you driving at with all this?

Bjørn. Sit still. (*Halla sits down.*) Last fall two strangers who stopped on their journey through here thought they knew Kari. They said it was easier to change one's name than one's face. As bad luck would have it, I did not get a chance to talk with them myself, but my suspicions were roused. Now there is a man staying with me who has just come from the south. He saw Kari at church last Sunday, and if he is right, it is an ugly story.

Halla. What do you mean?

Bjørn (*rising*). Neither more nor less than that your overseer's name is not Kari but Eyvind, that he was locked up for theft, and got away.

Halla (*has risen*). You must be mad, both of you.

Bjørn. The man would not swear that he had seen right. (*Smiles.*) Somehow he seemed sorry that he had told me. He said he had never seen two people more alike, and Eyvind had a scar on his forehead just as Kari has—that much he remembered plainly.

Halla. It was last Sunday at church that he saw Kari?

Bjørn. Yes.

Halla (*laughing*). Kari was not at church last Sunday.

Bjørn. That 's queer. Two of my men were there. But we can easily solve that riddle, if I bring my guest over here to-morrow.

Halla. I don't believe for a moment that Kari is a thief.

Bjørn. You need not believe it. Simply tell him what I have said, and that I mean to have the judge look into the matter. I warrant he will be out of the house before sunrise.

Halla. You are quick to believe evil and quick to run to the judge, but in this case you will not reap much honor.

Bjørn. If you suppose I shall act hastily, you are mistaken. I shall write to the county that Eyvind hails from and give the letter to my guest, who will see that it gets safely and speedily into the proper hands. The answer can be here within two or three months.

Halla. Is it out of kindness to me that you are so eager about this matter?

Bjørn. If it is true what people say, it would be best for you that Kari should take himself away from here as fast as can be. You might find it harder to part from him two or three months hence.

Halla (*icily*). Now you show your real self. You did not come here to give me kind counsel, nor do I look for such from you, but you had better leave me and my household in peace. Do you think I have forgotten what you did to me? When your brother told you that he intended to marry me, you thought it would be a disgrace to the family for him to make a poor servant girl his wife. You urged him to satisfy his fleeting passion, as you called it, without any marriage.

Bjørn. I never said that.

Halla (*laying her hand on her heart*). In here I have a sealed book in which I keep the words my friends have spoken. And I have more to tell you. There was something behind it—your fear of losing a part of your power.

Bjørn. What are you saying?

Halla. Did that prick your soul, you godly man! You knew that your brother would follow your advice like a child, but you had misgivings that you could not work me

like dough in your hands, and what you feared came true. You can never forget that I made my husband stand on his own feet. I know your greed for power! But now I warn you for all time to let me and mine alone. (*Sits down.*)

Bjørn (*flushed with anger, but still controlling his voice*). Much have I learned to-night that I did not know before. Now I see why you made Kari overseer. You are not your mother's daughter for nothing.

Halla (*her lips trembling*). You want to make me angry. You can't do it. Nor shall you succeed in blackening Kari in my eyes. You were hoping that I should hurt him by telling him what you have said. I shall not tell him.

Bjørn. You will talk differently when I hold the proof in my hand. (*Shakes his hand; goes toward the door.*)

Halla (*rising, hatred burning in her eyes*). Just before you came, the servants were making bets about who was best at *glima*, you or Kari. Oddny was the only one who stood up for you. Kari thought you had grown so old and stiff in your joints that you would not dare to go in for a wrestling-match.

Bjørn. Tell Kari that I am ready to meet him this evening, if he wishes it.

Halla. No, I shall tell Kari that you have given your word to wrestle with him at the big sheep-folds in the fall. I hope to have a good many witnesses, when the bailiff bites the dust.

Bjørn. I will fight him whenever and wherever he may wish—anywhere but in jail. Good-bye! [*Exit.*

Halla (*stands motionless for a moment; passes her hands down over her face; goes to the door; calls*). Gudfinna! Gudfinna! (*Goes back into the room; again passes her hands down over her face.*)

Enter Gudfinna.

Gudfinna. Has the bailiff gone?

Halla. Yes.

Gudfinna. He came near upsetting me in the hall and didn't even say good evening.

Halla. Do sweep the floor! I won't have in here the dirt he has dragged with him.

(*Gudfinna takes a bird's wing and sweeps.*)

Enter the Boy.

The Boy (*shouting*). Come and see what we have caught!

Gudfinna. Not so noisy! Did you catch a whale?

The Boy. We got a salmon—so big! (*Shows the size with his hands.*)

Halla. Tell Kari to come here; I want to speak with him. I will let you take care of the salmon. Open and clean it, sprinkle some salt on it, and lay it in fresh grass overnight.

The Boy. Won't you look at it before it is cut?

Halla (*patting his cheek*). You big baby! Do you think I have never seen a salmon before? Now run and tell Kari that I want to speak to him. [*Exit the Boy.*

Gudfinna (*calling after him through the door*). And tell him to lift the milk pot from the fire.

Halla. If the coals are good, I must ask you to do some baking to-night for Sunday.

Gudfinna. The coals are good enough. [*Exit.*

(*Halla stands listening. Footsteps are heard in the hall.*)

Enter Kari.

Kari. You wanted to speak to me?

Halla. I hear you have made a fine catch. Thank you! I have promised the bailiff that you shall meet him in

a *glima* at the folds in the autumn. What do you say to that?

Kari. I call that great news, but surely that was not what he came here for to-night?

Halla. No, he had another errand. He spoke ill of you.

Kari. What did he say?

Halla. There is a man just come from the south who saw you at church last Sunday. He told Bjørn that you looked like some one by the name of Eyvind, a thief who had run away. He even thought he recognized the scar on your forehead.

Kari (*in a low voice, sitting down*). And did the bailiff believe the man was right?

Halla. He said I should tell you that he meant to speak to the judge, and that then you would flee from here this very night.

Kari (*rising with a loud laugh*). This is to laugh at. Do you know when they will come to catch the thief!

Halla (*has been looking at him steadily; holds out her hand to him*). Give me your hand, Kari, and say that you have nothing to fear from any man.

Kari (*evasively*). I understand that this seems strange to you, but the man who saw me must be some one who has a grudge against me from former days, and does this out of spite.

Halla. What do I care about him or about the bailiff! Say that you are innocent!

Kari. So you doubt me, too!

Halla (*aloof*). I have no right to call you to task.

Kari (*warmly*). I know of no one in the world whom I would rather trust than you.

Halla. You are innocent?

Kari. Yes, in this I am innocent.

Halla. God be praised! (*Puts her hand on her heart.*) If it had been otherwise, I don't see how I could have borne it.

Kari. I shall remember the bailiff for this.

Halla (*in an outburst of joy*). Let him do his worst! What care we! I am so happy now that I know you are innocent, I could kiss you for joy. (*Exultantly.*) Kari, will you be my husband?

(*It is growing dark.*)

Kari (*terrified*). No, Halla, I cannot.

Halla (*stares at him, speechless. Suddenly she goes close to him and scans his face*). Have you a wife?

Kari. No.

Halla. I could not believe that your eyes lied this evening. (*Stamps her foot with anger and shame.*) Take yourself away from here! Go! (*Covers her face with her hands; rocks to and fro.*)

Kari. My eyes did not lie to-night. (*Stands for a moment in terrible emotion; then begins to walk up and down.*) I knew a man named Eyvind. His father was poor and had many children. Eyvind was the next to the oldest. It was said in those parts that thieving ran in the blood of his kin, though no one could say anything against Eyvind's father. (*Halla looks up, listening.*) Two years ago or more, toward the end of the winter, it happened, as often before, that there was no food in the house. Eyvind went to the parson to ask him to help them out with food. He offered to pay for it with his work in the spring, but the parson refused. It was late in the evening, dark and snowing. The road to Eyvind's home went past the parson's sheep-cots. (*As Kari proceeds, he now and then passes his hand over his forehead.*) They loomed before him like a big black mound. Then the temp-

tation came over him. The herdsman had gone home, the snow would cover up the tracks, and the parson was rich enough. I hated him! (*Halla rises.*) Late that night, Eyvind came home with a fine big sheep. The next day, word came from the parson. They had found his mittens in the sheep-cot. Eyvind was locked up and given ten years in prison. They thought they could prove that he had more thefts to answer for—(*He breaks off suddenly.*)

Halla (*breathlessly*). Kari!

Kari. My name is not Kari—it is Eyvind. I was sentenced for theft. I fled and lived one year in the hills as an outlaw.

Halla. After this I shall never believe in any one. (*Sits down and bursts into tears.*)

Kari (*kneeling*). Do with me what you will. Drive me out of your house—now—this evening, or give me into the hands of the law, but you must forgive me. It was our poverty and the snow that made me steal.

Halla (*rising*). I will not cry. It is stupid to cry. Get up! I am no God that you should ask my forgiveness.

Kari (*rising to his feet*). It is lonesome to live a whole winter up there in the hills. That is why I ventured down here, far from home, and under a new name. Since then I have gone about like one who walks in his sleep, afraid of the awakening. Many a time have I made up my mind to tell you the whole truth, but somehow it seemed to get harder with every day that passed. I have never understood why it was so before to-night, but now I know it, and now I can speak of it. Kari has loved you. You are the only woman he has ever loved, but now Kari is no more, and never has been anything but the dream of a poor and unhappy man.

Halla. Say no more!

Kari. He has loved you long, but never until to-night has he seen how beautiful you are. (*Carried away.*) Like a blue mountain rising from the mist!

Halla (*stepping close to him*). Close your eyes, Kari, and sleep yet a while. Kiss me!

Kari (*kissing her*). I will sleep with my eyes open.

ACT II

A resting-place near one of the large folds into which the sheep are driven in the autumn, when they are gathered down from the hills. A grass-grown dell. On the left, a steep heather-covered slope, here and there in the heather gray, jutting stones. To the right, a low bluff, where grass, flowers, and juniper bushes grow in the clefts and on the ledges. Toward the background, the bluff becomes lower and more bushy, and bending somewhat to the left, it partly shuts off the view into a hilly, rock-studded landscape with the distant mountains beyond. In the foreground, at the foot of the bluff, several saddles. The women's saddles have broad, brass-mounted backs.

It is a fine autumn day. Gudfinna alone is busy with the luggage.

Enter Arngrim carrying a roll of paper under his arm. His face is livid and drawn.

Arngrim. So you are all alone here.

Gudfinna. Indeed I am. I did not want to leave the luggage, and it seemed a pity to keep the boy from the folds.

Arngrim. Is Halla up at the folds?

Gudfinna. I don't know where she is now. She is so restless to-day. A while ago she climbed up on a knoll to see if the last drove was coming down from the hills. I hardly know whether it's the sheep or Kari she is looking for.

Arngrim. We don't get tired of watching for what we are looking forward to. I have but one thing to look forward to. (*Sits down on one of the rocks.*)

Gudfinna. And what is that, poor fellow?

Arngrim. To hear the nails being driven into my coffin.

Then I should say like the man in the story: "Now I'd laugh if I were n't dead."

Enter Halla, happy and smiling, wearing a silver girdle around her waist.

Halla. The last flock is coming, and it is not the smallest. Kari is with it.

Gudfinna. Of course he is with it.

Halla (*laughing*). Yes, of course. (*To Arngrim.*) I am glad to see you here.

Arngrim. Did you happen to bring anything good from home?

Halla (*smiling*). You never can tell. (*Searching in one of the saddle-bags, she finds a blue flask which she hands to Arngrim.*) You may keep the bottle.

Arngrim. That is just like you. (*Holds the flask up to the light.*) There are juniper berries in it. (*Takes a pull.*) It is like drinking sunshine.

Halla (*has moved toward the background and stands gazing*). What a change in the sheep since spring. Then they were yellow and dirty, but now they are white as ptarmigans in winter. It always makes me happy to see a flock of sheep coming down the mountain side.

Gudfinna. Kari's shoes must be a sight. He does n't save his legs, that man.

Halla. No, you are right in that. (*Goes to Gudfinna.*) But he runs swifter than any one else.

Arngrim. No one can run away from his fate, were he fleeter than the wind.

Halla (*turns to Arngrim*). Are you sure of that? May not a strong will turn the tide of fate?

Arngrim. My fate no one can alter. (*Looks up.*) An old

song comes to my mind when I look at you. I cannot remember how it runs, but it is about some one who had the thoughts of her soul written on her forehead.

Halla (*smiling*). I feel only the sun shining on my brow. [*Exit.*

Arngrim. She deserves to be happy. (*Brings out the roll of paper.*) Should you like to see what I am doing to make the days slip by?

Gudfinna (*goes to him*). Yes, let me look at it.

Arngrim (*opens the roll, which is seen to contain drawings in bright colors*). These are birds from the garden of Eden — too bad I never heard them sing! — and here is a blue flower so sensitive that it closes at the slightest touch, and here is a small plant from Gethsemane with red berries lying like drops of blood on the ground.

Enter the Boy, running.

The Boy. Kari is coming!

Gudfinna. We know that.

The Boy. I must be off again to help drive the sheep into the fold. (*Leaps with joy.*) What fun to be here! It's most as good as Christmas! [*Exit.*

Arngrim. He skips about like a merry little lamb.

Gudfinna (*calling after him*). Take care the rams don't butt you!

Enter Halla.

Halla. Now the sheep will soon be at the fold. (*Brushes her hair back from her forehead.*) Are n't you clever enough to know a cure for freckles? I am so tired of my freckles.

Arngrim (*smiling*). Perhaps you have a new looking-glass.

Halla (*smiling*). Perhaps I have.

Enter Jon and two other peasants, followed directly by two peasant women, Jon's Wife, and her friend with two little daughters, eight and nine years old.

Jon (*slightly intoxicated*). Now a bite of shark's meat would taste first-rate. You did n't happen to be so thoughtful as to bring some, did you?

Halla (*laughing*). That is just what I did. (*Looks in the saddle-bags.*)

Jon. Did n't I tell you so! (*Takes a brandy-flask out of his pocket.*) Do you mind if I bring out my bottle?

Halla. Please yourself.

Jon (*sits down. The others follow suit, until only the children remain standing*). If I did n't have so fine a wife, I should have asked you to marry me long ago. (*Takes a pull at the flask and hands it to the one sitting next to him.*) Let the bottle go the rounds!

Halla (*to Jon's Wife*). Your husband is happy to-day.

Jon's Wife. Yes, he loves everybody to-day.

First Peasant (*hands the flask to Jon*). Thanks!

Jon. Don't think I am forgetting you, Arngrim. (*Hands him the flask.*)

Arngrim. The blood grows colder as one gets old, and then the warmth of the bottle feels good.

Halla (*hands Jon a piece of shark's meat*). Help yourself.

Jon. Bless you! My mouth waters. (*Takes a knife from his pocket and cuts off a slice.*) It is white as milk and sweet-smelling. I say, shark's meat and brandy are the best things the Lord ever made — next to women! (*Hands the fish to one of the peasants.*)

Halla (*finds a piece of sugar-candy and divides it between the children*). Have the little girls been to the folds before?

Peasant Woman. No, this is the first time. I promised them last spring that if they were good and worked hard I would bring them, and they have surely earned it. It 's past belief how much they can do, no older than they are.

Halla. Did you see the last flock? That was a large one. (*Goes toward the background.*)

Jon's Wife. Indeed it was.

Jon. My brown bell-wether was the leader of the flock. He generally stays in the hills till they gather in the sheep for the last time, unless there are signs of bad weather. (*Gudfinna crosses over to the peasant women and fingers their clothes. They stand talking together.*)

First Peasant. I should not wonder if the winter were to come early after so good a summer.

Second Peasant. God knows how many sheep the hills have taken this year! Do you remember those cold days in the spring? It may be a good many lambs froze to death.

First Peasant. And then those cursed foxes!

Jon. The foxes are nothing to the men — both those down here and those in the hills.

Second Peasant. I don't believe there is anybody living in the hills, at least not in these parts.

Jon. You don't believe it? I tell you, my good man, there are more outlaws than you think. To my mind, the laws are to blame for it. If I had my say, all thieves would be strung up.

Second Peasant. Well, I look at it in another way. I believe the laws are too strict. It seems to me it is making too much of the sheep, when a man is locked up for life because he has stolen two or three of them.

Jon. You always have to be of a different mind from anybody else.

(*Halla comes back and listens.*)

Second Peasant. I don't know about that, but those who flee to the hills do it from need. If the laws were milder, I believe there would be no outlaws. What do you say, Arngrim?

Arngrim. If we were all to be judged by our thoughts, the hills would be swarming with outlaws.

Halla. It is too light yet to be talking about thieves. Can't you tell us something funny?

Jon's Wife. Tell about our calf.

Jon (*laughing*). When he saw the sun for the first time in his life, he fell down on his tail from fright.

Enter Arnes, somewhat intoxicated.

Jon. There comes the man who can tell us stories. (*Rises and goes to meet him.*)

Arnes. Good day to you all! So you want a story?

Jon. You shall have a drink if you tell us a story, but it must be a good one.

Arnes. Hand me the bottle. (*Drinks.*) I could tell you some spook stories that would make your hair stand on end, but they are better told in the gloaming. (*Laughs.*) The girls are less afraid of us men folks when they hear about spooks.

Jon (*laughing*). Yes, of two evils men are better than spooks.

Arnes (*sees Halla*). Now I know what I shall tell you. Hush! Once upon a time there were two outlaws. What their crime had been I don't know, but they had to flee to the hills to save their lives. They found a green spot among the glaciers, hemmed in by huge rocks. There they built their hut, for there they knew they would be left in

peace. But the hills were hankering for their old loneliness and hated those two, and swore they would drive them away. First they sent the storms and the frost. There came a winter night so terrible that the roots of the grass trembled with fear under the snow, but unknown to those two their love had built an invisible wall around the hut, and the storm and the snow could not get in. Then the hills sent hunger. It came to them in their dreams, tempting them with sweet-smelling hot bread and butter fresh from the churn. It would have them barter their love—

Enter a Farm Hand.

The Farm Hand. Is Arnes here by any chance?

Arnes. Here I am.

The Farm Hand. There is a sheep with earmarks that nobody can make out. Will you come over and take a look at it?

Arnes (*rising*). No peace to be had!

Halla (*holding out her hand to Arnes*). Thanks for the story. [*Arnes takes Halla's hand. Exit.*

The Farm Hand (*to Jon*). Your brown bell-wether ran away from the men as they were trying to drive it in.

Jon (*rising*). That promises a fine fall.

(*All the peasants rise.*)

Jon's Wife (*to Halla*). We shall see each other later.

Halla. So we shall. [*Exeunt peasants.*

Gudfinna. They have not been sparing of the shark's meat. (*Packs it away.*)

Enter Kari, warm from running, happy and smiling.

Kari. Good day to you, Halla! (*Shakes hands with her.*)

Halla (*has gone to meet Kari*). Good day to you, and welcome back!

thrashing. Once I really did it—I beat myself with a knotted rope.

Halla. How you must have suffered!

Kari. If anybody had told me in those days that I should ever become a happy man, I would have laughed at him. Then I believed riches and honors meant happiness. I used to dream of riding through the parish where I was born, dressed in fine clothes and with many horses.

Halla (*laughing*). I did not know you were vain.

Kari. Nor am I any more, but I have grown stingy. The minutes are my gold-pieces. (*Takes her hand.*) When I hold your hand in mine, I am happy. Before I cared for you, I did not see the sun shining, and now when it rains, all the drops prattle about you.

Halla. You do love me!

Kari. I seem to be in a church. I hold a torch in my hand and light one taper after another. For every taper that is lighted, the church grows larger and more beautiful. But I am a thief. If I am caught I must be buried alive, and now the church-bells are ringing. I hear the crowd gathering outside.

Halla. You frighten me.

Kari (*taking her face between his hands*). I must have a long look at your face. If I were to become blind this moment, I should always remember it. Your soul is in your eyes. When you look at me, I feel an unseen hand fondling my face. Whenever the sun shines, I shall see your eyes. It is hard to tell you, but when the sky grows red to-morrow, I shall be on my way to the hills. I must flee this very night.

Halla. I knew it. (*Sits down.*) Tell me how you have planned your flight.

Kari. I must be off before the winter sets in, and besides the letter from the south may be here any day now.

Halla. I know all that.

Kari (*sits down*). When I come home to-night, I shall say that I have seen the tracks of a flock of sheep farther up in the hills than we usually go to look for them. I shall ask you for two horses. You won't refuse me them? (*Halla shakes her head.*) I shall say that I must start at once, this very night, before the tracks disappear. When I don't come back, they will think I have come across outlaws or have met with an accident.

Halla. And where shall you go?

Kari. To the mountain plain where the warm springs are. I lived there before I came to you.

Halla. How long will it take you to reach it?

Kari. Three days. It is about in the middle of the country.

Halla. And there you will build your hut?

Kari. No; last time I lived in a lava cave. I had brought with me some tools that my brother gave me, and I left them there. Something told me that I might need them again. (*He is silent.*)

Halla (*taking his hand*). You must tell me more, much more. I want to see the place where you will live (*with a strange smile*), so that I can come and visit you in my thoughts.

Kari. I forget what I have told you and what I have not told you. You may think that the hills are wild and forbidding, but that is not so at all. In the summer, when the sun is shining, they are beautiful. The glaciers lie like white untrodden land in a sea of sand, their lower rim flashing green and blue in the sunlight. When you come nearer, you see a chain of jagged sandhills like a dark surf, where the glacier and the sand waste meet. (*He is silent again.*

Halla has picked a flower and is pulling its petals.) Why are you doing that? What are you asking about?

Halla. You love me!

Kari. Do you need to ask a flower about that? (*Rising.*) Are you not the least bit sorry that we must part?

Halla (*rising*). Would it make it easier for you, if I were to whine and weep like a child?

Kari. I don't know. (*He is silent.*) Yet you need not pity me. I am rich—I am king of the hills! The fire on my hearth never dies, day or night. The country is mine, as far as my eyes can reach. Mine are the glaciers that make the streams! When I get angry, they swell, and the stones gnash their teeth against the current. And I own a whole lake with a fleet of ice-ships and a choir of swans.

Halla. I never said that I pitied you.

Kari. But one thing you must promise me. You must not marry the bailiff.

Halla. But, dear man—

Kari. If you do, I shall come some night and kill you both, first him and then you.

Halla. Are you really jealous of the bailiff? He hates me.

Kari. Why should he be hounding me like a wild beast, if it were not for your sake? I have never done him any harm.

Halla. I promise you that I shall never marry the bailiff. (*Puts her arms around his neck and tries to draw him to her.*) Kiss me, Kari!

Kari (*gently pushing her away*). My name is not Kari. From this day on my name is Eyvind—"Eyvind of the Hills," they call me in the southland, my brother told me.

Halla. From my lips you shall never hear any other name than Kari. By that name I learned to love you. A man who is not loved has no name. (*Takes his hands.*)

Kari (in a sudden outburst, drawing her to him and kissing her forehead). God bless you, Halla! (*With difficulty mastering his voice.*) Now I am going to the fold. (*Turns away from Halla.*)

Halla (calling). Kari! (*Kari turns back.*) Must I ask you to marry me a second time? I thought we two were married.

Kari. So we are before God.

Halla. So far as I know, it is the custom that when a man moves from one place to another, he takes his wife with him.

Kari. Do you think there is anything in the world I would rather do than live with you?

Halla. Then ask me if I am willing.

Kari. Will you be my beloved wife and go with me through all suffering?

Halla. I will!

Kari. Will you take upon yourself half of my guilt and become an outcast like me?

Halla (exultantly). I will!

Kari. Will you face hunger and cold and all terrors for my sake?

Halla. Have you not always known that I would go with you? Could you believe me so low that I would keep you here with this dread hanging over you, if I had not meant to go with you? Every night I thought: To-morrow he will ask if you will go with him.

Kari. How beautiful you are! All the days we have had together live in your face!

Halla. Did you believe I could rest satisfied in thinking of you with the mountains between us? Then you don't know me yet. I will live! I will sail with you in your white ships!

Enter Bjørn.

Bjørn. Good day to you, Halla. I looked for you at the fold. It is a long time since we two neighbors have met.

Halla (*confused*). Yes, it is a long time.

Bjørn. Who sees to it that your sheep are taken out of the fold? Your cots seem to be standing empty.

Halla. Kari attends to that.

Bjørn. Then it is time you sent him about his work.

Kari. Perhaps the bailiff has come to lend a hand?

Bjørn (*to Halla*). I should like to have a few words with you.

Halla. We were just starting for the fold. Perhaps we could have our talk on the way up.

Bjørn. If it is the same to you, I prefer to stay here. It is a matter of some weight, which I do not care to discuss in the presence of your overseer or any one but yourself.

Halla (*to Kari*). Then you had better go up to the fold.

Kari. Don't forget to ask the bailiff if it is true that he has been rubbing his knee-joints with fat every night the whole summer through. [*Exit.*

Bjørn. He 's bold enough, that fellow. It is well we shall soon be rid of him.

Halla (*roused*). And what was it you wanted to see me about?

Bjørn. We were both somewhat angry when we met last. Shall we let it be forgotten?

Halla (*relieved*). I thought perhaps you had got your letter from the southland with the proofs that you had been wrong in your suspicions.

Bjørn. Everything in good time. Did you say anything to him?

Halla. I told you I would n't.

Bjørn. I might have known that, since he is still here. Do you think I am beginning to look old?

Halla (*amazed*). To me you look as you have always looked. (*Watches him keenly.*)

Bjørn. I admit you were right in some of the things you said to me when we met last, but we all have our failings, and since my mother died I have had no one who dared to speak plainly to me except you.

Halla. You may not often have wished to listen to others.

Bjørn. Perhaps you are right, but somehow there must be two different souls in every one of us.

Halla. Have you had a good hay crop this summer?

Bjørn. Fairly good. At least I have enough for myself. Don't you understand what I want to say to you, or don't you want to understand?

Halla. You said that it was a matter of weight. That is all I know.

Bjørn. I am not skilled in fine words. Could you think of becoming my wife? (*Halla laughs. Bjørn flushes.*) Is that so laughable?

Halla. You can't be in earnest.

Bjørn. In dead earnest. I shall soon be forty-eight years old, but you are not a child any longer either, and we are of equal standing. If we two marry and make our farms into one, I think we should have to look outside of this parish for a finer property.

Halla. So we two should marry in order to join our farms?

Bjørn. I will not deny that I should like to see the boundary line gone between the two farms, but that is not the reason why I have made up my mind to ask you to marry me. It is not good for a man to be alone, and you are the only woman in this parish whom I could think of taking

for a wife. You are healthy and strong of body, and you are good-looking. What answer do you give?

Halla. I must have some time to think it over. This comes upon me unawares. Within three days you shall have my answer. Are you satisfied with that?

Bjørn. I think it is but natural that you should want some time to make up your mind, and all the more as we have not always been the best of friends. Perhaps you will now more readily understand why I did not wish you to have a thief as overseer of your farm, and I am sorry to say that my distrust was well founded. (*Pulls from his pocket a letter with a large seal.*) This letter came yesterday.

Halla (*holding out her hand*). May I see it?

Bjørn. It is an official letter, which I do not like to give out of my hands, but I am not afraid to trust you with it. (*Halla takes the letter; reads.*) I can lend you one of my men to drive your sheep home this evening, for you will have to do without your overseer. It is lucky that the judge is here to-day.

Halla. I shall keep this letter.

Bjørn. I can understand a joke.

Halla. Kari has been with me for more than a year. He has been a hard worker and an able man. I will not have any one lay hands on him so long as he is in my service. I want to give him a chance to get away. That is what you yourself advised, three months ago.

Bjørn. At that time the case was very different. There was no proof of his guilt then.

Halla (*putting her hand to her forehead*). I can't believe yet that he is a thief. (*Hands the letter to Bjørn.*) Bjørn, I beg of you to show me a great favor. You must let this matter rest, till we get home.

Bjørn. In that I cannot serve you.

Halla. Perhaps I can do something for you in return.

Bjørn. I don't understand how you can pity a felon and a thief.

Halla. Nor do I understand it myself, but somehow I do. You have just asked me if I would be your wife. Surely you will grant me the first thing I ask of you!

Bjørn. One would think you were pleading for your best friend.

Halla. I may have cared more for him than I knew myself. If you will let him get away, I shall have no objection to making our two farms into one.

Bjørn. I never thought your overseer would be the means of my getting you for a wife, but I yield on those terms. Once we are married, you will surely forget him. But he must be gone from here within twenty-four hours, and I want you to know that if he ever shows himself in these parts again, he will have to take his punishment.

Halla. You need have no fear that he will ever come back here.

Bjørn. Then let us forget all about him. You have saved him from jail for a time, but he 's sure to end there any way. (*Goes to her.*) Who would have thought that you should become my little wife! (*Tries to put his arm around her waist.*)

Halla (*draws back*). So many things happen that we do not look for.

Enter Kari.

Bjørn. You are just in time. It will surely please you to hear that your mistress is to marry me within a short time.

Kari (*turning to Halla*). What does this mean?

Bjørn (*laughing*). You had n't expected this. (*Goes to Halla.*) My sweetheart might give me a kiss.

Halla (*warding him off*). No, no!

Kari (*grasping Bjørn's arm*). That man lies! She is mine. (*To Halla.*) If you two get married to-morrow, still you are mine.

Bjørn. Has my brother's wife become a harlot?

[*Exit.*

Halla. What have you done, Kari? It was to save you I promised to be his wife. I hoped to get a chance to speak to you. He has the letter and is going to give you up to the judge to-day.

Kari. I could not bear that man to touch you.

Halla. You must run for the horses and flee!

Kari. That would be madness. The others have just as good horses. We must take what comes. I shall deny everything.

Halla. What good would that do? It is impossible to mistake the description. I have read it myself.

Kari. Did you really mean to marry the bailiff to save my life?

Halla. I lied to him, so that I could flee with you. I hate him.

Kari. I love you, Halla.

Halla (*in rising fear*). What shall we do? (*Wrings her hands.*) It is all my fault for holding you back. (*On the point of weeping.*) I am an unhappy woman.

Kari. You must not cry. Even if I faced the death warrant, I should not be sorry that I stayed. (*Kisses her hands.*) These summer days we have had together — in all eternity no one can take them from us.

Halla (*withdraws her hands excitedly*). Don't you know of any way? Say that the bailiff is your enemy and has had the letter framed up.

Kari. You know yourself that it would be no use. (*Goes to her.*) I believe it is God's will that you should not flee with me. I have told you how beautiful it can be in the hills, but all the terrors I have not told you of—the sand-storms, when the whole plain seems to be on fire, the nights as long as a whole winter, and the hunger stealing close to you like an evil mist. You might have come to hate me.

Halla. I will hear nothing of all that. (*Under her breath in terror.*) They are coming!

Enter Bjørn and the District Judge, followed by a crowd of peasants and farm hands. Others come in as the action proceeds.

Bjørn (*pointing*). There stands the man.

The Judge (*goes to Kari*). You say your name is Kari. (*Shows the letter.*) According to this letter, your name is Eyvind, and you are an escaped thief.

Kari. That is a lie.

Bjørn. Read the letter.

(*The Judge gives him a sharp look. He opens the letter and reads to himself, now and then raising his eyes from the letter to Kari's face.*)

A Peasant (*in a low voice*). What does the judge say?

Bjørn. In the early spring, a man came here who knew him (*pointing*) as an escaped thief. I wrote to have the case looked up, and yesterday I got the answer.

The Judge. The description fits you. It is my duty under the law to take you into custody.

(*Murmuring among the peasants.*)

First Peasant. I never should have believed it.

Kari. It is the bailiff to whom this letter was sent. May I be allowed to ask where it came from?

Bjørn. From the southland where you were born.

Kari. I was born in the east and have never been south.

Bjørn. Will the judge look at the seal?

The Judge. The seal is correct. (*To Halla.*) He is in your service. Have you found this man to be a thief?

Halla. No. He has shown himself a trustworthy and an able man. (*To the people.*) Don't you believe, as I do, that Kari is innocent?

The Crowd (*murmuring*). Yes, yes!

The Judge. I cannot judge this case. I must send him to the district where Eyvind's home is. (*To Halla.*) Can you vouch for him a few days? At present I cannot well spare two men for the journey.

Halla. I am not afraid to do that.

Bjørn. It seems to me unwise to set a woman to watch a thief. If the judge wishes it, I will take him into safe-keeping myself.

Halla. Does the bailiff think he can give counsel to the judge? I offer my farm as surety for Kari.

The Judge (*interrupting Bjørn, who is about to reply*). Silence! (*To Halla.*) Then you are responsible. [*Exit.*

Bjørn. I must say that the former judge was not wont to delay the law.

Halla (*to the peasants*). You came here to listen to false charges, but you shall have a better pastime. You shall see the bailiff himself play at *glima* with the man he calls thief.

Bjørn. You must be crazy! I won't touch him.

Halla. My dear brother-in-law made me a promise last spring that he would wrestle with Kari here at the folds. It was a wager, and now he is backing out of it. What do you say to that?

Bjørn. An honest man does not play with a thief.

Halla. He is no more thief than you are. Should you be a thief, because I said so? (*To the people.*) He is only too glad to get out of the *glima*. He is a coward! He is a coward!

(*Loud or suppressed laughter all around.*)

Bjørn. Never before has Bjørn Bergsteinsson been called a coward. (*Takes off his coat.*)

(*Kari throws off his coat. The crowd draws back, leaving an open space. The "glima" begins. Bjørn pushes Kari out to the back, and the people follow. The heads of the wrestlers are seen; then they disappear to the left. A moment of silence, then a sudden outcry.*)

All. Kari has won! Kari has won! (*Silence again.*) Bjørn is hurt! [*Exeunt some of the crowd.*

Kari. I think he has had enough. (*Goes to Halla.*)

A Peasant. Bjørn had his leg broken. We must help him.

Jon. I told them to look out for the rocks.

Halla. It was the bailiff who drew Kari out on the rocks.

[*Exeunt the rest of the peasants.*

Bjørn's voice is heard, threatening. You shall pay me back for this, Halla!

Arnes. I am glad he got it.

Arngrim. "Hard upon hard," said the old woman; she sat down on a stone.

The Boy (*goes to Kari, almost weeping*). You are not a thief!

Kari (*patting him on the head*). No, no!

Halla (*to Arnes*). Will you do me the favor to see that my sheep are driven home to-night? I don't want Kari to stay here any longer.

Arnes. I will do it gladly. (*To Kari.*) I meant to warn you against what has overtaken you now.

ACT III

A small grass-grown plot. In the foreground, to the right, a fantastic lava formation, a hollow cone five yards in height and three yards in circumference, once an enormous lava bubble produced by gases in the liquid lava. In course of time, the roof has crumbled, also the nearest wall. The farther wall is still standing, but there is a hole in it, through which the sky can be seen. Farther back and somewhat to the left, the wall of a small hut is seen, though partly hidden by the lava formation. The hut is built of stone, the walls of small stones chinked with sod, the roof of large lava slabs. To the left, a deep gorge, the farther wall of which is so much higher than the one near by that it completely shuts off the view to the left. At the bottom of the gorge, a stream. Farther up, the gorge makes a turn to the left, and here the upper part of a waterfall is seen. Behind this, the glacier. On the grass plot is a hearth with a smouldering fire. Some rocks covered with skins serve as seats. From the gorge comes the murmuring sound of the waterfall.

The stage is empty. A horn is heard, first a short call, then a longer.

Enter Kari and Arnes. They are weather-beaten, bareheaded, dressed in knitted jerkins and knitted knee-breeches. Their feet are bare in their shoes. Both have ram's horns hanging at their side. Kari carries a swan, Arnes a bunch of ptarmigans, some faggots, and a few tufts of bearberry.

Kari (*looking into the hut*). Halla! No, she is not here.

Arnes. She may have gone for water.

Kari (*lays down the swan*). It is quite heavy.

Arnes. You might have let me carry it. I had not tired myself with running.

Kari. As I had caught it, I wanted to carry it. (*Smiles.*) The old pride, you see.

Arnes. The honor would have been yours just the same.

Kari. This is the first swan this fall. (*Stroking it fondly.*) I am glad the feathers did n't get blood-stained.

Arnes. It would be lonesome up here if we were only two.

Kari. Indeed it would, but you have tried the loneliness before. Was it not two years you had been alone before you met us?

Arnes. Two and a half.

Kari (*pleased*). Do you know what we 'll do? We 'll hide the swan and say that we 've come home empty-handed. (*Takes the swan.*) Hand me the ptarmigans. (*Hides them behind the hut.*) Now I wish Halla would come soon. (*Walks to the back and blows his horn.*)

Halla (*is heard answering*). Hello!

Kari. Here she comes.

Arnes. You are a happy mortal.

Kari. Yes, I am happy, and it is good to be here. We are free. We have enough to eat. We have sunshine, water, and shelter. What more do you want? (*Arnes is silent.*) I know you are brooding over something you don't want to tell me. You seem more gloomy every day. Are you longing to get away from here?

Arnes. Don't let us talk about such things to-day.

Kari. Perhaps it would do you good to unburden yourself to me or, better still, to Halla. She is wiser than I am, and she cares a good deal for you, I tell you.

Arnes. There are not many like Halla.

Kari (*hastily*). We won't tell Halla about the mist. It might frighten her.

Arnes. I'll hold my peace.

Enter Halla, carrying a pail of water. The pail is of plaited willow twigs chinked with clay. With the other hand she leads a little girl about three years old. Halla is dressed in a white jerkin and black skirt, both of knitted wool. She wears her silver girdle around her waist. The child has on white knitted clothes. They are bare-headed, and their foot-wear is the same as that worn by the men.

Halla. Did you have good luck to-day?

Kari (*dolefully*). We have caught nothing but trouble and weariness. The ptarmigans made themselves scarce to-day. We saw a flock of six, but they flew away before we could get our snares out.

Halla (*to Arnes*). Is it true, what he says?

Arnes. It's true enough. We saw six ptarmigans, but they got away from us.

Halla. I am sorry. We must hope for better luck next time.

Kari (*laughing*). I fooled you that time! (*Runs toward the hut.*) Look here! Five big, fat ptarmigans!

Halla. Well, well!

Kari (*holding up the swan*). And that's all.

Halla. What a lovely surprise! How did you catch it?

Kari. I ran it down.

Arnes. I don't believe there are many who can beat him at that. I know I can't.

Tota. May Tota pat it?

Halla. Tota may do anything she wants to. I should like to make you a jacket of swan's down.

Kari (*cuts off the feet of the swan*). You would like these, wouldn't you?

Tota. Yes.

Kari. Some day when I have time I will skin them and make little bags for you to keep your pebbles in.

Halla. You've got lovely playthings there! (*Squats down on the ground.*) Where are mother's eyes? (*Hiding her eyes with the swan's feet.*)

Tota (*takes them away from her eyes*). Here!

Halla (*rising*). Did you eat all your food?

Kari. Every bite.

Halla. Then you can't be hungry.

Kari. No.

Halla. And it is too early for the evening meal, but I can make you some tea.

Kari. Yes, do. (*To Arnes.*) Let us carry the swan to the cave. [*Exeunt Kari and Arnes.*

Halla. Now Tota must be tied, so the waterfall can't take her, while mother is making tea. (*Takes a rope that is fastened to a rock and ties it around Tota's waist. Brings some of her playthings.*) Here are all your horses. (*Puts a kettle of water over the fire; places some earthenware cups on the rocks by the hearth; takes a handful of dried herbs from a bag, rinses them in cold water, and portions them out in the cups. The faggots Arnes has brought, she throws on the fire. As she works, she sings.*)

Have you seen a brave young lad?
'Tis my friend,
Dearest friend;
'Mongst all men in byrnie clad
The bonniest is he.
I have smiled my teeth all white and shining,
I have smiled my teeth all white and shining
with glee.

Have you heard his voice's call,
Call of love,
Song of love?
O'er my heart the sound did fall
And hushed its quick desire.
He has kissed my lips all red and glowing,
He has kissed my lips all red and glowing
as fire.

There! Now we must get the water to boil. (*Picks up the tufts of bearberry and goes to Tota.*) See what Arnes brought you!

Tota. They are berries.

Halla. Yes, but you must not eat them or you will get a pain in your little stomach. (*Rises and finds a long, stiff straw.*) Now I 'll show you what you can do. (*Threading the berries on the straw, she counts.*) One, two — four — six, seven — so many years your father and mother have been in the hills. (*Strokes Tota's hair.*) When you are sixteen, we shall have lived here for twenty years, and then we shall be free again. On that day, Tota shall wear snow-white clothes and shoes of colored leather, and mother will clasp her silver girdle around your waist. And when we come down to the lowlands, the first one we meet is a young man with silver buttons in his coat. He stops and turns his horse and stands looking after you ever so long. Then your mother has grown old and wrinkled, and her hair is almost as white as snow. Your father, too, has grown old. But you are straight as a silver-weed, and when you run, you lift your feet high!

Enter Kari and Arnes.

Kari (*laughing*). Ah, now it 's steaming. I nearly fell

headlong into the cave, when we lifted the cover from the entrance.

Halla. Did you? (*Gives the straw to Tota.*) Now you can go on by yourself. (*Rises.*) Is there any need of closing the cave every time? When it's not raining, it might be left open.

Kari. No harm in being careful. If they should come upon us suddenly, we surely should not have time to close the entrance, and they would find the cave and destroy all our stores, as they did five years ago. Do you remember when we came back to the old place and found nothing but ashes?—and winter setting in. Not a single piece of mutton did they leave us.

Halla. I don't easily forget.

Kari. Whenever I think of it, I feel like doing something wicked. After all, we are human too.

Halla (*laughing coldly*). We're only the foxes who take their sheep.

Kari (*to Arnes*). How did you hide your stores when you were alone?

Arnes. I had many hiding-places. Once I stole some twenty-eight pounds of butter. I stuffed it down into a fissure in a rock.

Kari. That was pretty shrewd.

(*They are silent.*)

Halla. Did you have a clear outlook from the mountain this afternoon?

Kari. Yes. There was a little mist far to the southward.

Halla. It was from the south that the cloud came in my dream.

Kari. You can never forget about that dream.

Halla. I counted fourteen men who came riding out of

the cloud. (*Silent for a moment.*) You are quite sure the two men whose tracks you saw a month ago did not get on our trail?

Kari. Quite sure. If they had, they would have come closer.

Halla. Just think if they had seen smoke and told about it down in the parish!

Kari. They have done nothing of the kind; for if they had, they would have been up here with many men long ago. Ah, the water is boiling.

(*Halla lifts the kettle from the fire and pours water over the herbs.*)

Kari. Your tea will soon be giving out.

Halla. Yes, I must take a day and gather enough for the winter. I will go down to the Sun Valley. Nowhere else are the herbs so fine.

(*They drink their tea.*)

Kari. Don't forget to lay in a store of herbs for your salve. You know how troublesome a little scratch can be, when the cold gets into it. You kept the honey I found?

Halla. I did.

Kari. That is good for wounds, too. And you must gather cotton grass for lamp wicks. (*Goes to Tota and gives her tea.*) Tota must have a taste, too.

Arnes (*has been looking at Halla*). Your hair was quite black before, but now there has come a sheen of red into it.

Kari. I have not noticed it, but your freckles are all gone, I have seen that. (*Patting her cheek.*) Are you going to give us more tea?

Halla. As much as you want.

Kari (*rises and goes into the hut; returns with three wooden pipes and two pouches, one large and one small*). You need

not be saving of the leaves, but the tobacco I shall have to dole out to you.

(*They fill their pipes.*)

Halla (*smiling*). It was foolish of you to teach me to smoke.

Kari. Why should n't you have that boon as well as I? (*Shakes his bag.*) You need not be shy, I have more in the cave, and when winter sets in and the snow is fit for skiing, we 'll take Arnes down to my brother's. He promised to lay in good stores of tobacco and salt, and I will pay him with wool, as I did last time.

Halla. If only you don't end by being caught on one of those journeys!

Kari. Never! (*They sit smoking in silence.*) Now I am just in the mood to listen to a good story. Have you one to tell us?

Arnes (*rising*). No, I have not. (*Goes toward the gorge.*)

Kari. It does not matter if you have told it before.

Halla. Arnes may be saving them for the winter.

Kari (*rises; lays down his pipe*). Do you know what you should do? Have a good talk with Arnes. I believe he is getting restless and thinks of leaving us.

Halla. I hope not.

Kari. I will go and take a bath. You can speak better to him alone, and I need to wash off the sweat. (*Sings on his way out.*)

Far in the hills I wandered; softly shone the summer night,
And the sun had ne'er a thought of sleeping.
Now will I bring my sweetheart dear the hidden treasure bright,
For faithfully my vows I would be keeping.

Heigh, ho!
New and fine my stockings are, new and fine my shoes,
And not a care in all the world to plague me!

Halla (*sits silent*). Is time hanging heavy on you up here?

Arnes (*goes to her*). No, that is only something Kari has got into his head, because I am not always merry.

Halla (*smiling*). Once you boasted of being kin to the trolls.

Arnes. So I am. (*Halla rises; blows a great puff of smoke into his face; laughs. Arnes takes hold of her wrists.*) Once there were two trolls. They quarrelled and turned each other into stone. One had to stand where all the birds dropped their filth, and the other had to stand where all the winds blew. Which would you rather be?

Halla (*tears herself away*). I have not been turned to stone yet. (*Laughs.*) I thought you had forgotten all your old stories.

Arnes. You are strong.

Halla (*sits down on the grass, leaning on her arm*). Can you foretell things from the clouds?

Arnes. Yes, about the weather.

Halla. I don't mean that.

Arnes (*sits down beside her*). When I was a child, I used to sail my viking ships on the clouds. Do you want me to foretell your fate?

Halla. You just said that you could not.

Arnes. The clouds tell nothing about our lives. They are only the dreamlands of earth. Will you let me see your arm?

Halla. Why?

Arnes (*lifts her arm*). You think these lines on your arm are nothing but marks drawn by heather and grass, but

if I knew enough, I could read your whole fate in them. Something, perhaps, I can see. Who would believe that these slender arms could be so strong.

Halla (*laughing*). And what stands written there?

Arnes. You must sit still. Here is a deep, narrow line across your arm, that means sorrow. And there is a big fire. (*Stroking her arm with the tips of his fingers.*) I can see the tongues of flame. That means that you are loved. (*Kisses her arm.*)

Halla (*stands up; laughs*). Did you burn yourself?

Arnes. I should like to read your fate all day long.

Halla. Then you might tell me things I did not care to hear. But I must get to work.

(*Halla goes into the hut. Arnes looks after her. She comes out bringing wool, a spindle, and a sheep's skin.*)

Halla. If you are not too tired after the hunt, this skin can stand a little more.

Arnes. Give it to me. (*Takes a large ring made of a ram's horn. From the ring hangs a loop of rope, in which he puts his foot. He draws the skin through the ring and keeps pulling it back and forth. Halla sits down, turning her spindle. They are silent.*)

Halla. It is queer about the sound of the waterfall. Most of the time I don't hear it at all, but if it were to stop, I should miss it. Is it the same with you?

Arnes. Yes.

Halla. At first I was almost afraid of it. Then I began to love it, and now I should only miss it if it were not there any more. We mortals are strange.

(*They are silent again.*)

Arnes. Can you tell me why some people should be happier than others?

Halla. No, that I cannot.

Arnes. Kari has been happy for seven years.

Halla. Are you sure of that?

Arnes. Why should he not be happy? He has a wife and child.

Halla. Was there no one down your way whom you could bring with you up here?

Arnes. Who do you think would become an outlaw for my sake?

Halla. Would n't you dare to carry off a woman? I should try my best to be good to her.

Arnes. Do you think Kari would have dared to carry you off against your will?

Halla. Ask him.

Arnes. Why does he not show it, if he cares so much for you? He forgets about helping you with firewood and carrying water, and if the meat is not cooked the way he likes it, he scolds you. One might think you were his servant girl.

Halla. Don't let that worry you.

Arnes. And he can't even see the color of your hair.

Halla. Do you bear a grudge against Kari, because he caught the swan?

Arnes. You had house and home and a good name, and you gave it all up for his sake. He ought to keep that in mind more than he does.

Halla. I don't want Kari to be offering up thanks like a meek bondsman. Besides, I have done nothing for him. I did it all for myself.

Arnes. He does not even bother to curry the skins for your bedding. If you did not have me, you would have to do it yourself.

Halla (*stands up*). I don't want your help. (*Takes hold of the skin.*) Let go!

Arnes (*gives it up reluctantly*). Are you angry?

Halla (*takes the skin out of the horn-ring and throws it into the hut*). You are not so sorely needed as you think you are. (*Sits down again to her work.*)

Arnes. I did not mean that. It makes me happy when I can do some little thing for you. Won't you let me finish it?

Halla. You shall not touch it.

Arnes (*stands for a moment, puzzled*). Will you not forgive me what I said? I cannot bear to have you angry with me.

Halla. I am not angry.

Arnes. When you were ill, I once brought you some green leaves that had come up through the snow. Then you gave me a kiss.

Halla. Did I? (*Smiles; kisses him lightly on the cheek.*) Have you peace in your soul now?

Arnes. I don't know. I believe I shall never have peace in my soul any more.

(*They are silent.*)

Halla. You were good to me the time I was ill.

Arnes. I am not good to anybody. I am wicked.

Halla. You are not.

Arnes. Even with you I sometimes feel that I could hurt you.

Halla. We can all be ugly when we are tired and hungry.

Arnes. Will you let me kiss your mouth? Just once?

Halla (*rising*). No.

Arnes. Your lips will suffer no harm from it. (*Takes hold of her shoulders and tries to draw her to him.*)

Halla (*tears herself away from him*). Have you gone mad?

Arnes. You have been true to Kari for seven years now. It is time you tired of it.

Halla. Now your face looks like the bailiff's when he called me a harlot. (*Gives him a box on the ear.*)

Arnes (*furiously*). I know you better than you think. You are so pure! You have never done an evil deed!

Halla. What do you mean?

Arnes. Kari is more open-mouthed than you think. You have had a child before this one.

(*Halla shields her face with her hands as though warding off a blow. Arnes sits silent.*)

Halla. Why don't you say that I killed my child? That is what you meant to say. You know I did it.

Arnes. My cursed mouth.

Halla. You judge me. How can you? You don't know what it means to bring a life into the world. It grows heavier day by day like the snow of winter. If we had had spring and sunshine! But the times were hard and food was scarce. I did a good deed when I laid my child out in the cold. Far less suffering that than life!

Arnes. I do not judge what you did.

Halla. No, you thought I was an angel who was longing to be your harlot. You can go with a lighted candle into my soul and search it. You will find no remorse there. What could we have done with a child, if we had been forced to flee? Should we have left it with strangers? And how do you think it would have fared? A child of felons, scorned by all!

Arnes (*broken-hearted*). I did not know that my words would hurt you so much.

Halla. Do you think I did it with a light heart? I have

given birth to two children, and cruel was the pain, but I would rather bear ten children than live that night over again. When I had carried my child out into the cold, my mind gave way. In my ravings, I thought the child lay by my side, and above us was a flock of birds—pitch black. I bent over it to shield it, and the birds pecked into my back, into my lungs they pecked. (*Stops short from emotion.*)

Arnes. Would I were dead!

Halla (*calmer*). I wished for the death of that child long before it was born. (*Goes to Tota.*) But this my little spring-time child I have never wished ill. The first time I felt her life, it seemed a token of forgiveness that I was allowed to become a mother again, and when she came into the world, the sun was shining, and the sky was blue and warm. (*Kisses her.*)

Arnes. My tongue got the better of me. (*Puts his hand on his heart.*) There is a devil dwelling in me. (*Stands motionless.*) I love you.

Halla (*turns toward him*). Have you not done hurting me yet?

Arnes (*crushed*). No matter what I say, you think I mean ill.

Halla. I shall not speak to you again. (*Sits down to her work.*)

Arnes. Nor will you have to listen to me any more. I am going down to the lowlands, and there they can do with me what they like.

Halla. If you tell them of our hiding-place, they may let you off more easily.

Arnes. Even that you believe I could do!

Halla (*rising*). If you cared for me as much as you say, you would be good to me instead of bad.

Arnes. Love has made you good and me bad. (*He is silent.*) Do you remember the time Kari and I went up the glacier, and he fell down into a crack? He told you I had been so frightened that I shook all over. It was not for his life I feared; I feared my own thoughts.

Halla (*terrified by a dawning apprehension*). What do you mean?

Arnes. I have often wished Kari dead.

Halla. It is not true!

Arnes. It is. Do you understand now that I must go away from here? I no longer dare to live with you two, and neither do I dare to live alone.

Halla. I wish you had never crossed our path.

Arnes (*following up his own thoughts*). If Kari had not been so trusting as he is, I don't know what I might not have done; but he had such faith in me. You don't know all the words the Tempter can whisper in one's ear. I thought Kari had been happy so long that it would be only fair if he had to die now. It seemed to me that you and I were more akin in our souls, that we had more of the wilds in us. I felt it was he alone that stood between us two.

Halla. I forbid you to say another word. All your thoughts are lies. If Kari had died, I should have followed him. You would have had my corpse, not me. And if I had learned that you were the cause of his death, I should have killed you while you were asleep. I have given my all to my husband, even my conscience. I can go on living, even if he should not always care so much for me, but when I no longer love him, then I die.

Arnes. I am glad you love your husband. I don't know whether it is because I have unburdened myself of all my evil thoughts, or whether it is because I have made up my

mind to give myself up and serve my time, but I feel a peace within me that I have not known for long. To-morrow I shall go away from here and never come back. I shall tell Kari that I mean to take a short trip. (*Goes to Halla.*) Will you do the last thing I ask of you in this life—never to let him know the truth?

Halla. I can make you no promise.

Arnes. Then I will bid you good-bye while we are alone. I shall cross the lava strip and sit down where I can look out over the sand waste. You may tell Kari that I shall be back in an hour. (*Holding out his hand.*) Is there no hope that you can ever think of me without bitterness when I am gone?

Halla (*takes his hand*). Good-bye, Arnes.

Arnes. Good-bye, Halla. (*Walks a few steps; stops.*) When I am sitting within prison walls, I shall remember you as the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. [*Exit.*

Halla (*stands looking after him; then goes to Tota*). What a good, quiet little girl you are! Getting sleepy? (*Finds a small skin, which she spreads on the ground.*) Now mother will sing you to sleep, as she did in the old times. (*Unfastens the rope.*) Shall I, Tota?

Tota. Yes.

Halla (*sits down and takes her on her lap*). Then you must close your eyes. (*Sits silent, then hums as she rocks the child.*)

Sweetly sleep, my dear young love,
Outside rain is falling.
Mother safely away will stow
Horse and sheep and swan and dove.
Then we 'll rest, we two, for night is calling.

Darkness spreads o'er many a woe,
Sore hearts, broken pledges.
Meadows green laid waste I saw,
Scythe of sand the field did mow,
Death calls from the glacier's cruel ledges.

Are you asleep? (*She rises slowly, lays the child on the skin, and covers her up, then sits down to her work.*)

Enter Kari, his hair wet from the bath.

Kari. Do you know what I have a mind to do?

Halla. You must not speak too loud. Tota is asleep. (*Kari goes to the left.*) Where are you going?

Kari. I'll be right back. (*Disappears down the gorge. A moment later he comes into view again.*) Some day when I feel good and strong I have a mind to try to swim against the current all the way into the inner ravine. From here I should look like a dwarf down there.

Halla (*rising*). Arnes went out on the sands. He will be back in about an hour. He has made up his mind to start on a trip to the southland to-morrow.

Kari. I knew he was longing to get away from here. I only hope he will not come to harm!

Halla (*goes to him*). If he should never come back, we two should be alone, as we were in the old days. (*Takes his hands.*) Do you care a little for me yet?

Kari. You know I do.

Halla. I feel that I need to hear you say it.

Kari (*holding her hands*). And I show it far too seldom. I forget. You must tell me when there is anything you want me to do. (*Kisses her; releases her hands.*) Are you sorry that Arnes is going?

Halla. You never saw the queer little brook I found

once. It welled out from a moss-covered hillock and ran in a ring. Where it flowed the banks were green, but elsewhere there was nothing but sand. Its whole course was no longer than what I could walk in thirty steps. It seems to me that life is like that stream.

Enter Arnes, running.

Arnes (*in a whisper*). They 're coming!

Kari (*terrified*). What?

Halla (*goes to Arnes*). Are you trying to scare us?

Arnes. They 'll be here in a minute. I counted nine. You must flee at once! There 's no time to lose.

Halla. I won't run away from Tota.

Kari. We stand no chance, three against nine. You must leave her with them. There they are! For God's sake, run! (*Halla is on the point of running.*)

Bjørn's voice (*full of bitter malice*). Now catch the foxes!

Halla (*startled, stops*). It 's Bjørn! (*A terrible expression as of madness darkens her features. She seizes Tota; her voice is harsh and unnatural.*) The cub he shall not have!

Tota (*frightened and sleepy*). Mother!

Halla (*runs sobbing to the gorge*). Tota! Tota! Tota! (*Disappears.*)

Kari (*who has remained inert and dumb with terror runs after*). What are you doing?

(*From the gorge is heard the scream of a child, which is suddenly silenced. Halla comes up again.*)

Kari. Halla! Halla!

Bjørn's voice (*very near*). Make haste!

Halla (*shrieks to him*). Devil!

Enter Bjørn.

Bjørn (*grabbing Halla*). Now I 've got you!

(*Kari seizes his knife and stabs Bjørn through the heart. Bjørn falls dead. Kari and Halla flee. Bjørn's men enter, stand as though paralyzed at the sight of the slain man. Arnes goes slowly up to them.*)

could hardly walk. (*Plants himself in front of Halla.*) If he stood there now, bodily, should you have strength enough to hold his feet for me?

Halla. I think I should.

Kari. We should have to take care not to be too greedy. If we could only hold back the first two days, we might eat as much as we wanted afterward. (*His mouth waters; he swallows saliva.*) You have seen a butchered sheep hung up to dry in the wind; its flesh is as tender as a young girl's. I feel as though I could fondle it; I could bite it.

Halla. We have promised each other not to speak of food.

Kari. And how do you think the heart would taste smoking hot from the fire? I could swallow it in one mouthful. I should feel as if I had eaten, if I could only smell warm meat.

Halla. You will make me sick if you don't stop talking about food. Don't you think I am just as hungry as you are? And I hold my peace.

Kari. Yes, you hold your peace. (*Puts down the knife.*) If I did not see your eyes, I should think you were dead, and yet you are human and living like myself. Are you not? (*Halla is silent.*) Or perhaps you are a heathen image? Must I kneel down before you and pray for fine weather? Shall I build a fire before you and stain your feet with blood? What do you want?

Halla. I want to be left in peace.

Kari. You ought to be a tree, then you could wither in peace. Why don't you cry out like every living thing that suffers. You don't know how your calmness racks me. Even the trees cry and moan in the autumn gales—they wail!

ACT IV

A small hut in the hills. Two large stones covered with skins serve as seats. The low bedstead is also covered with skins. On the wall hang some poor, clumsy tools. In the slanting roof, a small window is darkened with snow. On the hearth, a low fire. Outside, a snowstorm. Now and then, snow comes whirling down the smoke-hole.

Kari is pacing to and fro, beating his arms. Halla sits silent. They are both dressed in skins.

Halla. Are you cold?

Kari. I don't know. (*Halla rises and puts some faggots on the fire. Kari takes a stick from the wall; counts.*) I need n't count the notches. This is the seventh day the snowstorm is raging without a break, and it is past Easter. How long do you think it can keep on?

Halla. It 's no use asking me about it.

Kari (*replaces the stick in the wall*). If the walls were not frozen so hard, the storm would have torn down the hut long ago.

Halla. It is bound to stop sometime.

Kari. You think so? It 's four years now since that terrible summer when the sun was red and dim from morning till night. (*In secret awe.*) There may come a summer when the sun does not rise at all.

Halla. It was the ashes that made the sun look so red that summer.

Kari. I could well live a whole summer without the sun, if I only had food. (*Picks up a big knife.*) This fellow has not tasted meat in a whole eternity. (*A rapturous ring comes into his voice.*) I remember a ram I once killed; he was so fat he

Halla. I should wail too, if there was any one that could hear me.

Kari. I don't care whether anybody hears my screams or not. I'll scream; I'll yell. (*Yells.*)

Halla (*stands up*). Are you not ashamed of yourself?

Kari (*in a weak voice*). This cannot last. I should have gone long ago. I ought to have gone at once, the first day the food gave out, but you thought every day that the morrow would bring fine weather. I know you said it to soothe me, but it was not right.

Halla. It was no use going to certain death.

Kari. I should never be afraid of getting lost. If the snowstorm is ever so dark, I find my way. (*Raises his hand.*) I know where I am by trend of the wind.

Halla. If you were so sure of yourself, you ought indeed to have gone long ago.

Kari (*hardening*). You say that?

Halla. Yes, I say that.

Kari. Take care! You have tempted me to stay day after day. Your believing and hoping palsied my will. You wormed your own fear into my heart and broke my courage. If we both die of hunger, the fault is yours, and yours alone.

Halla. Is it my fault?

Kari. You have lived in the hills for sixteen years, and you don't know them more than a child does. Perhaps you think the snowstorm will have pity? Won't you open the door and bid the snowstorm be still? Why don't you?

Halla. You say that it is my fault if we starve to death. Who was it that stole?

Kari (*stands for a moment speechless*). You are homely. I have never before seen how homely you are. Your face

makes me think of the head of a dead horse. (*Reaches out his arms.*) May I feel of your hair if it doesn't all come out?

Halla. Don't touch me!

Kari (*lets his arms fall. An expression of sadness comes into his voice*). I thought you were the only one who understood that I could not help what I did. Neither could you help what you have done, and yet you are bringing my misdeeds up against me.

Halla. Never before have I upbraided you for this, but you put the whole blame on me.

Kari. And you said it in such a hard tone. It was as if you struck me with stones.

Halla. My voice was no harder than yours.

Kari. It 's becoming in you to chide me, as if you had not yourself urged me to steal many a time!

Halla. Since we became outlawed we have had a right to steal. We had to do it to keep from starving.

Kari. I thought you had forgiven me, and then you have been hoarding your charges. For sixteen years you have kept them, and they have not been corrupted either by rust or moth.

Halla. Come now, don't be angry, Kari. I said it in the heat of temper.

Kari. I am not angry, but it hurt so! I thought that you would be my spokesman before the Great Judge. If you could forgive me, He might do it, too.

Halla. I did not mean to hurt you. I only said it to defend myself.

Kari (*following up his own thoughts*). There are stones in the hills that are blood-stained from my feet; you must gather those and bring them before the Great Judge.

Halla. Won't you take to weeping, so I can gather up your tears and bring them before the Great Judge?

Kari. Are you mocking me?

Halla. Yes; I won't listen to your whining any longer. Now we shall sit down and hold our peace. (*Sits down.*)

Kari. You shall not be worried by my whining. (*Takes the fur socks down from the wall; sits down and unties the straps of his shoes. Halla watches him in silence, while he puts on one sock.*)

Halla. Are you going?

Kari. Yes.

Halla. You don't ask my advice?

Kari. No, this time I don't ask it.

Halla (*rising*). When you go out of that door, you need not think of me any more.

Kari. I know your voice when you are angry. You ought to thank me for going out in such weather.

Halla. Yes, you are brave. It is not that you have any hope of saving our lives. You will only lie down in the snow and die.

Kari. You can believe it if you like.

Halla (*goes to him*). I beg of you, let those hard words be forgotten.

Kari. It is not because of them that I am going. The worst that can befall me is to die in the snow, and that is better than sitting here.

Halla. First of all, we must use our common sense. The only thing we can do is to wait here until the weather clears.

Kari. And then the food will come flying in through the door!

Halla. Not that, but there will be means of help. We

can dig up roots to still the worst hunger, and we can go to the lake for fish.

Kari. The snowstorm may last four or five days yet, and by that time we shall be dead from hunger.

Halla. How long shall you be gone?

Kari. Two days at the most.

Halla (*goes to him and touches his shoulder*). I beg you to stay for my sake! We have lived together for sixteen years, and now let us also die together.

Kari. I know your way of hiding your will. Now it is your will that I should stay, but this time you are foiled.

Halla. You cared for me when I fled with you to the hills. You told me there was no one like me in all the world. You carried me across the streams, until I grew strong enough to ford them myself. You risked your life to get the things you knew I liked. Have you forgotten?

Kari. I have forgotten nothing.

Halla. And all the nights we slept with the heavens above us! Was it not blessed to feel the morning breeze over your face and to open your eyes and look into the blue sky? Then you kissed me and said that you loved me.

Kari. You shall not stop me from going.

Halla (*turns away from him*). I know why I have this fear of being alone. It is because I am so far away from every living thing, and there's no sun and no stream here. (*Turns toward him.*) If we feel that we must die, you can close the smoke-hole, and I will fill the hut with smoke. We shall lie down side by side. (*Touches his hand.*) I will take your hand, and we shall dream that we are going out into a sand-storm together.

Kari (*harshly*). Now leave me in peace.

Halla (*in helpless fear*). I will tell you the truth. I don't dare to be alone.

Kari. Are you afraid of the dark?

Halla. When you are gone, I know I shall begin to listen. I know what I shall hear.

Kari. What do you hear?

Halla. I hear the sound of a great heavy waterfall. I hear the screams of my child. You must not leave me.

Kari (*turns away*). You spare me nothing; you make my going as hard as can be.

Halla. I forbid you to go! It 's inhuman to leave me here alone. If you ever come back, you will find me a mad beast.

Kari. Now you shall keep still. I will not listen to your whining any longer.

Halla. You are like all the rest. When your will is set, you have no heart. (*Sits down silently.*)

Kari (*fastens his foot-gear; ties a rope around his waist*). When I draw it tight enough, I don't feel that I am hungry. (*Puts on a coat of heavy fur.*) You must watch the fire and not let it go out. I'll bring you some more faggots from the wood-shed.

Halla (*stands up; her voice is husky*). Better kill me before you go. (*Bares her breast.*) Stab me with your knife—right here! I won't scream. (*Shuts her eyes.*) I shall think I am nursing my child, and the little teeth are biting my breast.

Kari. Have you gone mad?

Halla. You haven't the heart, but you have the heart to let me sit here all alone. A wretched little train-oil lamp you would put out before you went; you could not bear to let it burn over nothing. (*Sits down.*)

Kari (*stands silent a long time*). I have been guilty of

many a bad deed, but so far as I know, I have never been cruel. Nor will I be cruel to you. (*Takes off his coat.*) Then we shall wait together as you wish. Does that make you feel happier?

Halla. I don't know. I can feel neither joy nor grief any longer. I think I would rather be alone.

Kari. You don't mean that.

Halla. If you think it wiser to go, you must do so.

Kari. I thought it would make you glad if I stayed.

Halla (*rising*). If you had taken me in your arms and told me that you loved me with all my wretchedness and all my homeliness, that would have made me glad; but you did not.

Kari. Yet you know it was for your sake I stayed.

Halla. Are you so sure of that? Perhaps you were afraid that you might be guilty of a wrong deed. I think you had in mind the Great Judge rather than me.

Kari. I have once been judged by men; that is why I so often think of the last judgment.

Halla. I will have no talk of conscience between you and me. Be yourself with me, whether you are good or bad. After all, you don't know if the Great Judge looks kindly at what you call good deeds. Look at me! Look at me! You could not be more cruel to your worst enemy. Why was I given this hunger and not the food to still it? I have never wished to be born. I would rather be anything else than a human being. I would rather be the sand, whirling aimlessly over yonder waste. If there is a God, He must be cruel—but there is no God.

Kari. You are only lashing yourself up. You ought rather to humble yourself and pray God to help both you and me. Without Him we are but dust and ashes.

Halla. I want no mercy any more, but you can go on calling for help. (*Mockingly.*) I am sure He will hear you, if He is not busy breaking up the glaciers or cleaning out the gorge of a volcano to make it belch up more fire.

Kari. Don't say another word! We are wretched enough without your calling down new curses upon us.

Halla. I have but one soul and only wish before I die, and that is to do some unheard-of cruel deed. I should like to be a snowslide. I would come in the dead of night. It would be a joy to see the people half naked running for their lives—chaste old maids with gouty hips, and smug peasant women with bellies bobbing with fat. (*Sits down, breaks into a paroxysm of laughter, wild and continued.*)

Kari. You have become a monster. I am afraid of you —afraid of the only human being I care for. (*Walks over to a corner, where he finds his old Bible. Sits down, turning the pages with trembling hands; reads.*) "And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen."

(*They sit silent a while. Halla, leaning her elbows on her knees, her face buried in her hands, cries softly. Kari rises, stands silent for a moment, then goes to her.*)

Kari. You must not lose heart. When things are at the

worst, they will mend. Perhaps the storm will quiet down during the night.

Halla. It is so hard. (*Bursts into sobs.*)

Kari (*kneeling*). But, dearest Halla! Are you ill?

Halla (*warding him off*). Let me alone.

Kari (*rises slowly*). You were always so strong. I thought nothing could make you lose heart.

Halla (*looks up. She has stopped crying; her voice is calm and cold*). You don't love me any more. You have never loved me.

Kari. Is that what you are crying for?

Halla. Before when you wanted to leave me, I besought you by all the memories I thought were dear to you. That did not touch you. I humbled myself so low that I would have thanked you just for a little pity—that might have been an afterglow of your love, but you had no pity. You stayed only because you were anxious about your own soul.

Kari. I stayed also for your sake.

Halla. You know better. You would rather die than have your God find you guilty of an evil deed. You counted the saving of your soul higher than your life, but I have no God, and I have never been able to tell my soul from my love. If you had loved me, you would have understood that I was pleading for my soul. You would have heard it in my voice, but you did not hear it.

Kari. You forget that it was to save our lives I wanted to go.

Halla (*rises. Her eyes are large and burning*). Why did you not take me with you?

Kari. If I had gone alone, I might have come back alive. The two of us would have been sure to perish.

Halla (*kneels*). I once dreamed of two people. To them their love was the one and only law. When they had lived a long life together, they were thrown into direst need. Hunger drew near to the fine web that time had woven between them and would tear it asunder. Then they looked into each other's eyes, and together they walked out into the snowstorm to die.

Kari. It is every man's duty to keep alive as long as he can.

Halla (*rising*). And why should it be, when life has become an agony to ourselves and of use to no one?

Kari. It is the law of God.

Halla. The storm writes many laws in the sand. (*Sits down.*) When my strength had given out, you could have left me in the snow.

Kari. You know very well that I would never have done that.

Halla. That would have been better than to leave me waiting here. And I don't believe that death is so hard. The storm carries you until you drop from weariness, and then the snow comes and covers you up. (*Staring before her with eyes wide open.*)

Kari (*is silent for a moment*). You are bitter, because of our sore plight. Many a time have I told myself that I have been the curse of your life. If you had never known me, you would now be living in peace and quiet. You could have ridden to church every Sunday, if you liked. You would have been the rich and comely widow with all the young men flocking about you. I dare say you have often been sorry that you fled with me to the hills. (*Halla is silent.*) I remember once we had been out hunting together all night. Early in the morning we stood on the rim of the mountain

plain looking down upon the fields and the dwellings of men. On some of the farms, the fires were lighted already, and the smoke rose straight up into the blue air, and the streams ran so quietly and pleasantly through the meadows. I thought then that I could see the homesickness in your eyes.

Halla (*starting up, her voice cold and calm again*). If I could only have saved my faith in my own love, but I love you no longer, and it may be that I never have loved you. As a child I used to live more in my dreams than in the life about me. When I fled with you to the hills, I thought it was because I loved you, but perhaps it was only my longing for the strange and unknown. Afterwards, when the days became harder and lonelier, my love for you was a shelter which I would seek when sorrow for what I had done came clutching at my heart.

Kari. Say no more! You are befouling our love—yours and mine. You say it was only a longing for the unknown and the free, unfettered life that made you flee with me to the hills. Shame on you! (*His voice is soft and full of sadness.*) I know what you have been. No woman was ever greater in her love than you. When the sun strikes the rim of the glacier, it takes on the loveliest hues, though in truth it is nothing but dull, colorless clay. So your love has been the sunlight in my life, and I love you—have always loved you. When I was away from you even for a single day, I would long to see you and hear your voice as eagerly as I would long for the murmur of a brook when nearly dying from thirst. When I went hunting and had good luck, I always thought of you. When I pictured to myself how pleased you would be, I forgot all about my weariness. But you must not ask the impossible of a man.

Halla (*rising*). I am cold. Will you fetch some wood?

Kari. Yes, indeed. (*Goes to the door; leaves it ajar.*) You cannot see a hand before you. (*Goes out and shuts the door after him.*)

[*Halla goes to the door, listens, opens the door. A cloud of snow comes whirling in. Outside the storm sweeps past. She takes a long, lingering look around the hut, goes out into the doorway, throws her head back, and disappears, carried by the storm.*

(*The stage stands empty for a moment.*)

Kari returns, covered with snow, his arms full of faggots.

Kari. Why do you leave the door open? (*Sees that Halla is not there, drops the faggots, goes out hurriedly, calls.*) Halla! (*His call is heard outside the hut. He comes back into the doorway, looks in, cries out.*) Almighty God! (*Two heart-broken cries are heard outside, the latter farther away and hushed by the storm.*) Halla! Halla!

(*The snow comes whirling into the empty hut.*)

THE HRAUN FARM

[*GAARDEN HRAUN*]

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

1912

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SVEINUNGI, *owner of the Hraun Farm.*

JORUNN, *his wife.*

LJOT, *their daughter.*

EINAR, *a relative of Jorunn.*

JAKOBINA, *an old woman.*

FRIDA, *a child, eleven years old.*

SØLVI, *a geologist.*

JON
INDRIDI
HELGI
RANNVEIG
BJØRG
THORA
} *Servants.*

A Shepherd Boy.

The action takes place in Iceland. Time, the Present.

"Hraun" is the Icelandic word for lava-field.

ACT I

The farm. Five white gables, all adjoining and separated by heavy partitions. The roof is covered with turf, the walls are of earth and stone. The gable farthest to the left is without a door, but has two windows on the ground floor and a smaller window above. The next has a door leading into the "badstofa" or servants' quarters. The third is a dairy and storehouse; the fourth, a smithy; the fifth, a drying-shed. In the yard is a horse-block; to the left, a picket fence. Before the doors lie the packs unloaded from nine horses: two green chests, sacks of grain and household stuff, lumber, and a number of other articles. Jakobina stands feeling one of the sacks. Helgi is undoing the strappings. The door to the smithy is open. Einar is seen within, forging horseshoe nails.

It is morning, before breakfast.

Jakobina (*talking half to herself*). This must be coffee. (*Lays her hand on one of the chests.*) And what has Jorunn got in these, I wonder! I fancy there are many pretty things there.

Helgi. You may be sure of that.

Jakobina. Nineteen years I've been here now, and it's never happened yet that the mistress has forgotten to bring something or other to please me when she came back from town,—and it was n't always little things either, God bless her! Oh, but there they have knocked off the paint. What a shame! (*Sits down on the chest and runs her hand over the paint.*)

Enter Bjørg and Rannveig from the left, carrying pails full of milk, which they set down.

Rannveig. They brought home quite a bit. We shall not go hungry for a while yet. Where are they?

Helgi. They are inside, drinking coffee.

Bjørg. Is Jon drunk?

Helgi. Not so very; he 's just a little gay.

The Shepherd Boy. Are you through milking already?

Bjørg. Can't you see for yourself?

The Shepherd Boy. Oh, pshaw! (*His eyes light on the lumber piles. He bends down and begins to count the knots in the wood.*) One, two, three—

Enter Sveinungi from the "badstofa."

Sveinungi. What do you say, girls? Quite a pack, is n't it?

Bjørg. I should say so!

Sveinungi (*to Helgi*). You 've begun to undo the strappings? That's fine. And here come the others.

Enter Jon and Indridi from the house. Jon is somewhat intoxicated.

Jon. Here stands our dear master. Good day to you, Rannveig! Good day!

Bjørg and Rannveig. Good day, and welcome home!

Sveinungi (*laughing*). Why don't you put your arms around the girls and give them a kiss? Are you afraid?

Jon. No, Jon is n't afraid.

Sveinungi. You did n't get anything with your coffee.

[*Runs into the house.*

Jon. He is the same as ever.

[*Bjørg and Rannveig carry the milk into the storehouse.*

Jakobina (*rising*). You did n't take notice of anything in particular on your way back?

Indridi. Not that I remember.

Jakobina. Did you see many birds?

Indridi. Come to think of it, I don't believe I saw any.

Jakobina. That 's what I thought. [*Goes into the house.*

Enter Sveinungi from the house with a flask and a glass, which he fills.

Sveinungi. Here, this is for you.

Jon (*drinks*). Thanks.

Sveinungi (*fills the glass again for Indridi and Helgi*). Won't you take a drop too, Einar?

Einar appears in the doorway of the smithy.

Einar. Thank you. (*Drinks.*)

Sveinungi (*sees the Shepherd Boy*). Are you here? Why, the girls are all through milking. Do you suppose you can keep the sheep standing in the fold all day? (*The Shepherd Boy is about to go.*) Wait a minute! I have a little thing here that I bought for you yesterday. (*Takes a knife from his vest pocket.*) I think the blade is good iron, and that is the main thing. (*Gives him the knife. The Shepherd Boy kisses him.*) It is not much. You are welcome to it.

The Shepherd Boy (*opens the knife*). Look, Einar, it 's a regular hunting-knife. (*Closes it, runs to the left, calling.*) Snati! Pila! Snati!

Rannveig. You need n't call the dogs. They are up at the fold. [*Exit the Shepherd Boy.*

Sveinungi. That boy will amount to something in time. It 's well done for one so young to tend more than four-score sheep, and he has n't lost one yet.

[*Takes the flask back to the house.*

Jon. He 's in mighty good humor to-day, the old man.

Bjørg. I should say so.

Indridi. Why, he got the highest price for his wool.

Jon. And a sorry day it would be when we did n't get that!

Indridi. What do you think Jakobina had in mind when she asked about the birds?

Jon. It's hard to tell! She has her mind on so many things.

Enter Sveinungi and Jorunn from the house.

Sveinungi (*in the door, laughing and talking*). I believe the girls have their eye on the green chests. Indridi, will you carry them in? [*Indridi goes with one of the chests.*

Jorunn. You can put them in the little room.

Sveinungi. Rannveig, will you bring me the key to the drying-shed? You know where it hangs. (*Rannveig runs in.*) You boys will have to carry the breadstuffs up into the loft of the storehouse, and the coffee and sugar too, and while I think of it, you had better take one sack out to the mill, Helgi.

Helgi. I will.

Sveinungi (*opening a bag*). Here, Einar, you 'll find iron and nails and brazil-wood, and here 's something for yourself. (*Hands him a plug of tobacco.*) See if you can be a bit saving of it.

Einar (*pats him on the shoulder*). God bless you! [*Goes into the smithy.*

Rannveig (*comes out*). Here is the key.

Sveinungi (*unlocks the door to the drying-shed*). You can stack the timber on top of the old pile. After you have had your breakfast, you, Jon, and Indridi had better go and lie down. You must be tired.

Jon. I am sure I could keep on working all day if need be, and just as hard as those who have had their sleep. (*Indridi comes for the other chest.*)

Sveinungi (*laughs*). There are not many like you.

Jorunn. Where is Ljot? I thought she was here.

Helgi. I saw her walking in the yard. I have not seen her come back.

Sveinungi (*goes to the picket fence; calls*). Ljot!

Ljot (*is heard answering*). Yes!

Sveinungi. Are you there? Aren't you coming home?

Ljot (*is heard answering*). I am coming.

Jorunn. Have you set the milk?

Rannveig. Yes.

Jorunn. Then come in, if you want to see what I have bought.

Einar (*steps out into the door of the smithy. He holds a snuff-box in his hand, and is rolling up a long plug of tobacco, which he puts into the box*). This tastes better; the old stuff was getting as dry as hay. (*Spits.*) Oh, well, there was a time, but that's so long ago.

Helgi. What are you talking about?

Einar. It was a winter night, and I was lying in wait for the fox. Well, what happened was neither more nor less than this, that when I wanted to take a chew of tobacco, I found I'd left the box at home. I can stand it for one night, I thought, but it was cold where I was lying, and the fox made himself scarce. Let me tell you, when I had been waiting till nearly dawn, I'd gladly have given my soul for a good honest chew.

(*Ljot passes through from the right, carrying some freshly gathered flowers in her hand. Goes into the house.*)

Helgi. And did you get the fox?

Einar. I did. It came just as I was about to go home.

Enter Indridi from the house.

Jon. When you got home, I'm sure you went straight for a good big plug of tobacco.

Einar. Maybe I did! It was the finest blue fox I've ever shot.

Enter Frida from the left. She is warm from running.

Frida. Now I've turned the horses out on the grass. (*Wipes her forehead.*) Do you want me to pull the bellows for you?

Einar. You'd better go in and see if Jorunn should happen to have something for you. Then you can come back here. [*Frida runs in.*

Enter Bjørg and Rannveig from the house.

Bjørg. See what the mistress has brought for me! (*Holding up a piece of cloth.*) It will be fun to make that into an apron.

Rannveig. I got a head-kerchief with red flowers (*holds it up*) and a piece of soap. (*Smells it.*)

Jon. May I? (*Smells it.*) You'll be good to kiss, when you have washed with that soap.

Rannveig. Only I won't let you.

Thora (*in the doorway*). I must show you what I got, too.

Enter Sølvi from the left, carrying a gun over his shoulder and a small knapsack on his back.

Sølvi. Good day to you!

The Servants. Good day!

Indridi. We did not see you coming.

Sølvi. I took the short cut. May I have something to drink? I am thirsty.

Rannveig. I'll get it for you.

Sølvi (*lowering his voice*). And may I see Ljot for a moment? I have something for her.

Rannveig. I'll tell her. [*Exeunt Girls.*

Indridi. Have you any news?

Sølvi. No.

Indridi. You are still at Hol?

Sølvi. Yes.

Indridi. Have they begun to cut the hay?

Sølvi. Not yet.

Indridi. They generally start before any of the other farms.

Sølvi. They need to. They don't keep much help.

Enter Rannveig with the milk.

Rannveig. Here it is, and you are welcome to it.

Sølvi (*drinks*). Thanks.

Rannveig. I have told Ljot. [*Goes in.*

Helgi. Here, give me a hand! (*Indridi lifts the sack to Helgi's back; Helgi carries it out to the left.*)

Jon (*coiling the last ropes*). We can start carrying the lumber into the shed.

Enter Ljot from the house.

Sølvi. Good day to you, Ljot!

Ljot. Good day! You wished to see me?

Sølvi. You won't be angry with me?—I thought perhaps you would like this. (*Takes the skin of a duck from his knapsack.*) I shot it on the creek the other day, and I thought it was so pretty that I took off the skin and dried it. Do you think you could make use of it—say for a riding-cap?

Ljot. It is beautiful.

Sølvi. When you hold the wing this way the spot is blue, and when you hold it so it is green; it 's the way the light falls.

Ljot. I doubt if I dare take it. I scarcely know you.

Sølvi. You would make me very happy if you would take it.

Ljot. Then I will, and thank you. (*Gives him her hand.*) How lovely it is!

Sølvi (*lowering his voice*). Do you never go for a walk by yourself in the *hraun?*

Ljot. Why do you ask?

Sølvi. You know the pretty spot by the old roan tree; it is not more than a good ten minutes' walk from here. I thought perhaps you might go there sometimes on Sundays.

Ljot (*blushes*). I don't know—

Sølvi. I shall be there all day Sunday. Good-bye, Ljot.

Ljot (*confused*). Good-bye.

Sølvi. I shall be there at sunrise, and I shall be there when the sun goes down. [*Exit to the left.*

Enter Sveinungi, hurriedly.

Sveinungi. Who was it that went just now?

Indridi. Is he gone? It was Sølvi.

Sveinungi. What did he want here?

Indridi. He got a cup of milk.

Sveinungi (*to Ljot*). It seemed to me he was talking to you. What have you there?

Ljot. He gave me a bird's skin.

Sveinungi. Pshaw! You should have made him keep it himself.

Ljot. There was no harm meant.

Sveinungi. Einar could have brought you down one just like it, if you had cared for it. Why are you blushing so?

Ljot. I did not think you would be so angry because I took the bird's skin.

Sveinungi. I can't bear him, that stone-picker! He roves from place to place like a tramp. Let him dare to set his nets for you! Give me the creature, and I 'll hand it back to him next time he comes; for he 's sure to come.

Ljot. I can burn it myself, if you grudge me the keeping it. [*Goes in.*

Sveinungi (*talking in the doorway*). And then you get angry to boot. (*To Indridi.*) I see you have undone all the strappings.

Indridi. Yes.

Sveinungi. Where is Helgi?

Indridi. He went to the mill.

Enter Helgi from the left.

Sveinungi. There he comes. Then you can do what I told you. [*Goes in.*

Helgi. Anything amiss? The master seemed cross.

Indridi. That 's nothing.

Helgi. Is Sølvi gone?

Indridi. Yes. Let 's get through with this. You go into the storehouse and take the things as I hand them to you.

[*They carry the breadstuffs into the storehouse.*

Einar appears in the door of the smithy.

Einar. H'm, I feel I 'm getting old. There was a time when I could forge three nails in one heating, and now it 's a hard rub getting through with one.

Indridi. We can't be young more than once.

Einar. And we can't cast the slough of old age, as they could once upon a time.

Indridi. Would you care to?

Einar. I don't know. I almost think these new times are not for me.

Enter Frida.

Frida. Einar, I was to call you to breakfast. (*Runs against Sveinungi, who is coming out.*)

Sveinungi. There, there! Why, you have brought it all

under cover and the ropes in the shed. That 's fine. Now, Helgi, when you have eaten, you can go and begin to cut turf. The others will join you when they have had their sleep. (*Lowering his voice.*) Einar, will you ask Ljot to come out? I want to have a little talk with her.

Einar. I will. [*Einar and Frida go in.*

(*Sveinungi locks the drying-shed and looks into the storehouse, pretending to be very busy.*)

Enter Ljot from the house.

Ljot. Here I am, father.

Sveinungi. I did not hear you. (*Smiles.*) You step as lightly as a young foal. You are not hurt at what I said a moment ago? It was only for your own good. I won't have any shiftless straggler around here making eyes at you. The parish can gossip about something else. (*Ljot goes to the fence, resting her hands on it.*) But that was not what I wanted to talk to you about. (*Goes to her.*) You know Arne, the farmer at Skrida. You have seen his son Halfdan. What do you think of him?

Ljot. I have seen him only a few times.

Sveinungi. There are two brothers. The older one is married and is going to take the farm, but Halfdan is most like his father. You should see the way their place is kept. Their yard is nearly as big as this, and there are long stretches where the grass stands so high that it falls over. It's as fine a sight as I have ever seen. We stopped there, Jorunn and I, for a full hour, on our way back from town, and there was no lack of welcome. Can you guess what we talked about?

Ljot. No.

Sveinungi (*laughs*). You can't? Arne asked me whether I would have his son Halfdan for a son-in-law.

Ljot. And what did you say?

Sveinungi. I said I had nothing against it—quite the contrary. I should be content if you had a husband like him, and we are getting old, your mother and I. We don't know when death may strike us. It may come at any time, and I should like to see the man who is to take my place when I am gone.

Ljot. I don't think you are getting old.

Sveinungi. Oh, yes, I feel it. Sometimes when I want to use this or that for my work I find that I have clean forgotten where I put it. That could never have happened when I was young; there was not a thing that slipped my mind. But what do you say, Ljot? Your mother thinks as I do, so it lies solely with you whether you will accept this happiness or not.

Ljot. I don't think I care for that happiness.

Sveinungi. You should weigh your words well before you speak. Perhaps you fancy there will be a wooer like Halfdan coming every day. But you don't mean that; you only mean that he must come and speak for himself.

Ljot. I am so young, father.

Sveinungi. You are past nineteen. There are many girls who marry at seventeen, and you have been so well taught that you can readily take your place at the head of a household. I need not be ashamed of you there, that 's sure. And you will have your mother near you, for it is understood, of course, that you and Halfdan stay here with us. You will have your bridal now in the fall, and next spring you can take over the farm.

Ljot. But I scarcely know him at all!

Sveinungi. Your mother did not know me, and I can't see but that we two have lived happily together all these years. It is not always those who marry for what they call love who are happiest. Arne and I are friends from old times, and I have as good as given him my word.

Enter Jorunn from the house.

Ljot (*straightening herself*). You should not have done that without speaking to me.

Sveinungi. What has come over you? Do you mean to go right against the will of your parents? I can tell you one thing, if it is this tramp you are thinking of, it shall never come to pass. Not as long as I live. [*Goes in.*

Jorunn. Your father was angry. What were you talking about?

Ljot. He wants me to marry a man I don't know.

Jorunn. Does he? You cannot say of Halfdan that he is a man you don't know.

Ljot. We have never spoken a word to each other.

Jorunn. Yet he has been here several times. Once he stayed overnight. Besides you have heard him spoken of, and you know his people. Everybody knows the Hofstad people.

Ljot. Father has given his word without asking me. He had no right to do that.

Jorunn. You have worked yourself up, Ljot. I don't understand you. Can it really be that you have promised yourself to some one without letting your parents know it?

Ljot. I have not.

Jorunn. You need not hide anything from me. If you have given your word, you must keep it.

Ljot. I told you that I have not.

Jorunn. You could not tell your old mother a falsehood! But if you are free and not bound by any promise, this puzzles me. Halfdan is young and a capable man, and his father is one of the richest and most respected farmers in the countryside.

Ljot. But I don't care for him. You can't mean that I should marry a man I don't care for. (*Leans over the fence.*)

Jorunn. Once you are married you will come to care for him. (*Goes to her.*) It is a great step you are about to take. Weigh your words well, so that you may not rue them. Be careful not to thrust away happiness when she reaches out her hand to you, or there may come a day when you will repent. You must know that your parents wish nothing but what is good for you.

Ljot (*with tears in her voice*). It seems to me you are against me, both you and father.

Jorunn (*stroking her hair*). I believe you are hiding something from your mother. I think I know what it is. You were very much pleased with the bird's skin you got to-day. (*Ljot is silent.*) The winter your father asked me in marriage there came to my home a man who used to go from farm to farm doing odd carpenter jobs. One evening I carried his coffee to him where he was at work. He had a big chest standing there that he kept his tools in. I can remember it plainly; it was yellow. I stood waiting for him to finish his coffee so that I could take the cup back, when he took out of the chest a work-box — the prettiest thing I've ever seen. It was of dark brown wood, the lid round, with pictures of animals carved on it. He made me a present of it, and when I was about to go, he asked me for a kiss, but I would not give it to him.

Ljot. You never told me about this.

Jorunn. He was a good-looking man, with big brown eyes. Well, when your father came, my father and mother both wanted me to become his wife. It was not altogether easy for me, but I would not go against their wishes. I thought it my duty to please them, and besides the other man had never asked me straight out.

Ljot. But he was the one you cared for.

Jorunn. Perhaps I thought so at the time. (*Silence.*) He went away on the night he heard that I was promised to your father. A year after I married your father, he was drowned—some thought he had taken his own life.

Ljot. Maybe that was your doing.

Jorunn. How can you say such a thing to your mother!

Ljot. Don't be angry with me, mother.

Jorunn. A man who cannot bear his fate is not worth much. I should not have been happy as his wife, and I could not wish for a better man than your father. When two people live together a whole lifetime and have an honest will to do what is right by each other, they will come to care for each other, as the years go by. (*Silence.*) I have told you this so that you may think it over, but if you feel in your own heart that it is right to go against the wishes of your parents, then you will have to do so. (*Ljot is silent.*) You say nothing, my child? I have tried as best I could, in my poor way, to do what seemed my duty. I cannot give my daughter any other or better advice. When the hour of sorrow comes, as it must come to you too, there is nothing else that can bring you peace.

Ljot. I will do as you wish.

Jorunn. I always knew that I had a good daughter. (*Strokes her hair.*) How glad your father will be! This will

be a great day for him, and you will never regret that you did as your parents wished. [*Goes in.*

(*Ljot stands alone.*)

Enter Einar and Frida from the house.

Einar (*to Frida*). You can start the bellows. I hope the fire has not gone out. [*They go into the smithy.*

Enter Helgi from the house. He goes into the smithy and comes out again with a turf-spade in his hand.

Einar (*in the door*). Shall you be home for dinner?

Helgi. No, the others will bring it to me.

[*Exit to the left.*

Enter Sveinungi.

Sveinungi. Are you here? Won't you come in and talk to your father? (*Patting her shoulder.*) This is the happiest day in my life since the time I got your mother. [*They go in.*

Enter Jakobina with a plate of chicken-feed in her hand; goes to the door of the smithy.

Jakobina. Is Frida there? Can you spare her while she runs over to the chickens for me with their food?

Einar. Yes, indeed. [*Frida goes with the chicken-feed.*

Jakobina (*sits down on the horse-block*). I had such a queer dream last night. I thought I was standing out there in the yard, and I saw a giant come striding across the *hraun.* I saw him stop right there—he stood with arms stretched out and bent down over the house.

ACT II

A grass-grown yard, some rocks partly sunk in the ground. In the foreground, farthest to the right, a tent. In the background, to the left, the farm-house. In the outskirts of the yard a sheep-house with the roof and part of the walls in ruins. Beyond it, the "hraun," a lava-field stretching for miles, studded with jutting rocks and lava formations.

It is evening of the same day.

The Servants (*seated, singing*).

God the power unending
Rests with Thee alone.
Cherubim are bending
Low before Thy throne.
From Thy Heaven hear me!
Weak and soiled am I,
Wounds and sorrows sear me,
Fainting I draw nigh.
Is there then another way?
Sorrow's rising hills may they
Not reach up to heaven, pray?
Help me—lest I die.

(*They cover their eyes in prayer. Silence.*)

Jorunn (*uncovers her eyes*). The peace of God be with us. (*The Servants rise and shake hands.*)

Jorunn (*patting Frida's cheek*). Now you must not be afraid of the earthquake any more. When we trust in Him, no harm can befall us. (*Gathers the hymn-books.*) Please take the books back to the tent, Ljot; it's a little too early yet to go in. (*Ljot goes with the books.*) And you may fetch the shoes I was sewing. I left them in there.

(*Some sit on the rocks, others squat in the grass. Only Sveinungi remains standing.*)

Ljot (*coming from the tent*). Here are the shoes, mother.

Jorunn. Thank you, daughter.

(*Ljot lies down in the grass, gazing out over the "hraun."*)

Indridi. Did you hear the church-bells ringing?

Einar. I did not hear them.

Jorunn. I did. They rang of themselves.

(*Silence.*)

Indridi. Where were you, Thora, when the shock came?

Thora. In the kitchen.

Indridi. It's your week, isn't it?

Thora. I don't know how I ever got out, for the whole floor heaved under me, so that I was thrown right against the wall, and you should have seen me when I came out —all black from the falling soot.

Jon. And the rest of you—where were you?

Bjørg. We were sitting in the *badstofa*, sorting wool.

Rannveig. It felt as if some one was shaking the roof and trying to pull up the whole house.

Indridi. We were just about to leave our work and run home to hear how you had fared, but then I thought they would be sure to send us word (*looking askance at Sveinungi*) if anything had happened. Besides, we wanted to get enough turf cut while we were at it so that we should not have to go back another time.

Jon. But I must say that when I began working again, it went against me. It was like cutting into a living thing —like skinning a live animal.

Rannveig. Ugh, yes.

Jon. And the place where we 'd cut turf last year looked like an ugly scar.

(*Silence.*)

Jorunn. Did you meet anybody when you came home from work?

Indridi. No.

Jorunn. And no outsider has been here this afternoon. They don't come when they are wanted. I ought to have sent one of you to the next farm to find out how things were there, anyway.

Jon. I can easily go yet, if mistress wants me to.

Jorunn. Oh, no, it 's getting late. I hope we shall have no bad tidings from any one.

Indridi. I hope so, too.

Jon. I 'm afraid the Vik farm-house has fallen. It is both old and poorly built—nothing like ours.

(*Silence.*)

Einar. You should have seen the hawks, Jorunn, right after the shock. They kept flying back and forth, just as they do when they 're warding off a foe from their nest.

Jorunn. They were frightened.

Einar. And no wonder. Great pieces of rock came tumbling down into the creek. The sheep out on the heath yonder huddled together in flocks, looking like old snow.

Jon. Then you were out hunting.

Einar. No, I was not hunting. I was looking at the hawks, wondering whether one could get at them by going down in a rope.

(*Silence.*)

Jorunn. What about the boy, Sveinungi? Do you mean to let him stay with the sheep all night?

Sveinungi. Certainly. He can sleep to-morrow.

Jorunn. I was only thinking he might be afraid to be alone.

Sveinungi. He 's no more afraid than grown people.

Jorunn. I saw he took both the dogs with him.

(*Silence.*)

Helgi. There was a man walking across the *hraun* a little while ago. Who can it be?

Indridi. I saw him too.

Jon. It was Sølvi. He carried his gun.

(*Silence.*)

Ljot. How still it is on the *hraun.*

Einar. I thought you were listening for something, while you lay there quiet as a mouse. I thought you were listening for the earthquake.

Frida. Can one hear the earthquake when it is coming?

Rannveig. Are you afraid? Yes, sometimes it can be heard a little before the shock. They say it sounds like the clatter of hoofs from many hundred horses.

Bjørg. To me it sounded like the whistling of the wind.

Jorunn. You should sit down, Sveinungi. You 'll get tired standing.

Sveinungi. I am not tired.

(*Silence.*)

Frida. What if the earth should open up right here where we are sitting?

Rannveig. It won't. Who told you that it might?

Frida. Jakobina said so.

Rannveig. You must not listen to all she says; she talks so much.

Jakobina. I say nothing but what is true. At the time of the last great earthquake the ground cracked and made a

fissure many miles long; I saw it myself. The earth opened her mouth to breathe.

Einar (*to Frida*). Don't be afraid. I have a black lamb —do you remember it?—with white feet. When I get it home in the fall, I will give it to you.

Jakobina (*facing the "hraun"*). Not one of you knows the *hraun* as I do. Can you tell me why the hollows out there are never filled with snow? Have you ever seen the snow falling fast enough to cover even the rims around them? It's the earth blowing her breath against it. The earth sets traps for men; the earth is a man-eater.

Jorunn (*to Jakobina*). You must not frighten the child. (*Silence.*)

Sveinungi. Was n't it you, Jakobina, who said that sometimes blood comes on the window-panes? It bodes ill, they say.

Jakobina. Why do you ask? There is no one here who has seen it, is there?

Sveinungi. Never mind why I ask.

Jakobina. Well, if I must say it, it is a sign that some one in the house is going to die soon.

Sveinungi. Or it might bode ill to the farm itself, maybe.

Jakobina. What do you mean?

Sveinungi. That it might be doomed.

Jorunn. Indeed, it means neither the one nor the other. It 's nothing but a silly old superstition.

Sveinungi. Not that I believe in it, but look at the windows. Don't they look as if they were wet with blood?

Jorunn. It 's the sun shining on them.

Sveinungi. And see the gables, how white they are. They don't look whiter from the fields down yonder when you spread a cloth over them to call me home.

Indridi (*lowering his voice*). Did you see the sheep-cot fall?

Thora. Yes, it happened just as we came out.

Indridi. What did Sveinungi say?

Thora. He said nothing.

Indridi. But he told us to move out here.

Thora. No, it was Jorunn who made us do it.

Sveinungi (*to Jorunn*). I did not tell you that when I came into the *badstofa*, right after the shock, our old clock had stopped running.

Jorunn. Was it broken?

Sveinungi. No, when I touched the pendulum it started again, but the place was still as death when I entered. The grass on the roof cast a shadow over the skylight. It was as quiet as when my father lay dead.

Jorunn. I think we had better go and lie down. There's nothing gained by staying here any longer.

Sveinungi. I can't see that there was any need of moving out, but you had your way, Jorunn.

Jorunn. I feel sure that they have done the same on all the other farms. We must be thankful it is summer, so that we can stay outdoors.

Sveinungi. Must we be thankful? So you give thanks that my work is ruined.

Jorunn. We must take what comes, whether good or evil, and trouble may help us to remember all the things we have neglected to give thanks for.

Sveinungi. I don't know but that I have always done my duty. I have built all the sheep-cots; I have fenced in the land and looked after it as best I could. I demand justice of Him up there.

Jorunn (*rising*). I won't listen to such talk. Did you buy

the land from Him, perhaps? And what did you have to pay with that was not His already?

Sveinungi. You need n't mock me. You can walk all over the yard and cut your handful of grass with your scissors wherever you like; it grows thick as wool everywhere, and it 's all my work.

Jorunn. Was it you who ruled the *hraun* for thousands of years so that it did not swallow up the bit of ground you are standing on, which you call yours? [*Goes into the tent.*

Sveinungi. Which I call mine! (*Stamping his foot.*) It is mine! I've bought the land from Him up there with my work.

(*The Servants rise.*)

Jon. I believe the worst is over and that we shall be let off with the fright.

Indridi. I hope so.

Bjørg. You can never tell. Remember what happened the time when more than three-score farm-houses fell in one night.

Thora. It must have been dreadful.

Sveinungi. Now you must all go into the tent.

[*The Servants go in.*

Jakobina. I should n't wonder if something dreadful were to happen to the farm. [*Goes into the tent.*

(*Sveinungi stands quite still a little while, then walks a few steps, pauses, takes a few more steps, and again stops.*)

Enter Ljot from the tent.

Ljot. Are you not coming, father? Mother told me to ask you to come in.

Sveinungi. Why does n't she lie down? She need not wait for me.

Ljot. We are so frightened, father —all of us.

Enter Jorunn from the tent.

Jorunn. It's getting cold.

Ljot. Yes, it is cold.

Jorunn. The sun has set.

Sveinungi. Why are you coming out again, Jorunn? Can't you sleep?

Jorunn. No, I can't sleep.

Sveinungi. Do you remember the night you thought I was lost in the snowstorm? A light was burning in the upper window. To see it was better than meeting a human being, and when the dogs began to bark behind the door, it was just as if the house itself were speaking—calling out its joy. It sounded better to me than a human voice, and when I stepped into the hall, the darkness seemed to put its arms around me. Never have I had so sweet a welcome, not even when my daughter was a little child.

Jorunn. Ought we not to go in, Sveinungi? It's getting late. You too must go in now, Ljot.

Ljot. I am only waiting for father.

Jorunn. Do you hear that, Sveinungi? Ljot is waiting for you, and the servants can't sleep either before you go in.

Sveinungi. I am not going to stay in the tent to-night. I am going home.

Jorunn. You don't mean that!

Ljot. But, father dear!

Sveinungi. I won't let any foolish fear drive me out of my house, and it is nothing but a foolish fear. The earthquake will not come so suddenly but that I shall have time to get out. It's impossible. Besides, the *badstofa* will hold. It's well built, though it's old.

Jorunn. Do you think the *badstofa* will hold if there should come a big earthquake? You cannot mean that!

Sveinungi. It is not at all sure there will be another shock. It's only a fancy that the earthquake must needs keep on once it has begun. I believe it is over; I feel it. (*During the last speeches the Servants have been coming out of the tent.*) What are you running out for? Go in, all of you.

Jakobina. I must tell master about the dream I had. It was last night. I thought I was standing out in the yard and saw a giant coming across the *hraun.* He walked with long, unsteady strides (*she takes a few steps forward; her voice sounds distant and threatening*), and seemed to grope as if he were blind. Then I saw him standing right by the house—with arms stretched out; he bent down over the farm and stood there like a stone cross. (*Makes the sign of the cross with her arms.*)

Sveinungi. Did I ask you to tell me about your dream?

Jorunn. I beg of you, Sveinungi, that you do not stay at the house to-night. It would be tempting God.

Sveinungi. It 's rather He who is tempting me. If I ran away, it would serve me right to have the house fall down. (*Pointing to the house.*) There it has stood waiting for me every evening as far back as I can remember. I have seen the windows flaming in the sun. I have seen them wet with rain. I have seen them white with frost. I've been with it ever since I was a child. I have climbed on the roof as I climbed on my father's shoulders. When I stood on the ridge, it seemed it had lifted me up to let me see better. No, Jorunn, even if I knew the earthquake to be coming, I should go home. Nor is it any wonder that I long to get into my own bed. I am old now, and I have

waked up there almost every morning of my life. I have gone to bed so tired and worn that I could barely stand on my feet and have waked up young and strong. I have been ill and have lain there watching the sunbeams flitting across the floor. [*Sveinungi walks homeward.*

Jorunn. Are you going home? (*Following him hurriedly.*) Whatever happens, your fate shall be mine.

Sveinungi (*stops and looks back*). Do you hear that? She is not afraid, my wife.

[*Sveinungi and Jorunn walk homeward.*

Ljot. How can you do it, father? (*Walks a few steps away from the others and remains standing there.*)

Jakobina. God be with you, Jorunn, and with you, Sveinungi. You have been good to me, these nineteen years.

[*Goes into the tent.*

(*Silence.*)

Helgi. There, they went in.

Bjørg. Yes, they are in there now.

Jon. I think we had better go and lie down, since there is nothing we can do.

Indridi. No, we can do nothing.

Thora. It will be a long night.

Rannveig. Poor Ljot!

[*The Servants walk slowly into the tent.*

(*Einar and Ljot remain. Silence.*)

Einar (*goes to Ljot*). I wish I could make you happy as easily now as when you were a little girl.

Ljot (*struggling with her tears*). Father does not care for me at all. He does not think of me for a moment.

Einar. Your father cares for you, no doubt of that, but he is beside himself with the earthquake.

Ljot. You don't know what I am talking about. (*In*

sudden fear.) If only something dreadful does not happen!

Einar. We must trust to the Lord to keep us all. Won't you too try to lie down?

Ljot. I can't sleep.

Einar. Perhaps you would rather stay here a little while. Let me bring a shawl for you; it is getting cold.

[*Goes into the tent.*

(*Ljot stands motionless looking out over the "hraun."*)

Einar (*coming from the tent*). They are asleep in there already. Won't you put the shawl around your shoulders?

Ljot. I am not cold.

Einar. Then I 'll spread it over one of the rocks for you to sit on. They are wet with dew. (*Spreads it over the stone.*) There! What did you have in mind when you stood there looking out over the *hraun?*

Ljot. I was thinking of an old tale Jakobina once told me. It was about a young girl. She went out on the *hraun* with bare feet to meet her sweetheart, and wherever she stepped the moss grew under her foot.

Einar. That 's a pretty story. I can tell you one too, if you care to hear it. It might help to quiet you a little.

Ljot (*takes his hand*). You are so good.

Einar (*sits down; relates*). In olden times, they say, there was an underground stream that ran straight through the country from south to north and was meant as a sign of truce between land and sea. It happened that a cross-eyed, ill-natured shark was trying to tempt a young whale to swim that stream from end to end. The whale's name was Spray-tail. He was the handsomest of all the young whales and could shoot three jets of water at once. The shark boasted that he had swum through the stream himself, but of course

it was only real fishes that could do it. Spray-tail felt stung on behalf of his kin, and as the shark had told him that there were openings here and there in the roof of this underground way, he made up his mind to try his luck, trusting that he could hold his breath from one opening to another. But it fell out otherwise. Spray-tail never came back. The last ever heard of him was that some swans, in their flight over the hills, had seen a jet of blood spurting out of the ground.

The whales were in a rage and, as they thought in their grief that the land had broken truce, they goaded the sea to wreak vengeance upon it. Are you listening?

(*Ljot nods her head.*)

One night a dreadful storm broke. The sea came rushing in over the land, fell upon the rocks like a monster, and tore them to pieces. The next morning thousands of sea fowls' nests were wrecked, and where green fields had been there were black sands. Now there was sore need of wise counsel. A shrewd old raven said that the fire should be roused. All the birds agreed that the raven had spoken well, but none dared do the deed. The raven was made judge, and decided that the spider should undertake the ticklish task, and that the eagle should carry her to the crater.

They gave the spider ten fat blue-flies to take with her. She spun herself well and firmly under some strong feathers, and off they went. They flew over deep dales, over dreary wastes, and over glaciers. In the evening they came to the fire-mountain, and there they rested overnight, but they did not sleep much, for the fire was snoring like a giant down below in the earth. Early the next morning the eagle flew to the top of the mountain. The spider made fast her thread

and spun herself slowly down into the crater. It was dark down there, and the heat and sulphur made her eyes smart, but she could see enough to make out that the fire lay sleeping under a very thin black coverlet. The spider knew nothing but the finger-language, and she moved her legs incessantly, telling fully and truly all about the havoc that was wrought, and urging the fire to come to the rescue lest the whole land be swallowed up by the sea. Yet the fire did not stir. Then the spider bent her legs up under her and let herself fall all the way down to the fire. She stretched out one leg and poked the black coverlet. From that moment she could n't remember anything till she was lying at the rim of the crater again. She peeped down and saw that the fire had thrown off the coverlet and was red and blazing. Then the spider understood that her task was done. Everybody knows how the fire had its reckoning with the sea and filled up whole fjords with lava and ashes.

(*Sølvi is seen approaching from the "hraun."*)

Ljot (*rising*). You must tell me that story over again some time. I could not listen rightly.

Einar (*rising*). Who is that coming so late? (*Looking.*) Now I know him; it 's Sølvi.

Ljot. I saw him a while ago walking over the *hraun.*

Einar. He may bring us news.

Enter Sølvi carrying a gun and with a game-bag on his back.

Sølvi. Good evening.

Einar. Good evening.

Sølvi. How good it seems to meet people! You have moved out, of course?

Einar. You are walking late.

Sølvi. You will have to take the earthquake as my

excuse. This has been a bad day. What has happened here at your place?

Einar. One of the outbuildings came down and a part of the yard-fence.

Sølvi. At Hol one wall of the house fell. The folks barely got out. (*Lays down his gun.*)

Einar. Was anybody hurt?

Sølvi. No. I could not stay there any longer. I saw your house standing, and that was a relief. (*Looking at Ljot.*) Yet I had to come.

Einar. What do you think? Do you believe the earthquake is over?

(*Sølvi fails to answer; looks at Ljot.*)

Ljot. My father and mother are sleeping in the house.

Sølvi. Why in the world are they doing that!

Ljot. We were ready to go to bed, but father would not come into the tent. Mother begged him to stay, but it was no use, and when father went back to the house, mother went with him.

Sølvi. But the buildings may fall at any moment if there should be another shock.

Einar. Sveinungi knows that as well as we do, but he would not let the house stand forsaken.

Sølvi. We must hope that no harm will come to them. So that is why you are still up. Have the others been in bed long?

Ljot. No, they went in a little while ago.

Einar. May I look at your gun?

Sølvi. As much as you like.

Einar. Is it loaded?

Sølvi. It is. (*To Ljot.*) You are not angry with me for coming so late? It seemed an eternity till Sunday.

Ljot. I knew you would come.

Sølvi. You knew it! Won't you sit down? I have something to show you. (*Ljot sits down. Sølvi opens the game-bag; takes from it a large fern.*) I found this out on the *hraun*. Is it not beautiful? (*Sits down.*) Look, the stem is no thicker than a hair, while the leaf can easily hide your whole face. (*Holds it up before her face.*) It trembles when your breath touches it.

Ljot. You have pulled it up by the roots. May I have the moss that came with it? (*Sølvi loosens the moss from the roots. Ljot lays it in her hand; smiles.*) When it withers, I 'll keep it in my shoes.

Sølvi. Will you keep it in your shoes? See these two small ferns on one root. They look like two slim hands. (*Looks at Ljot.*)

Einar (*puts the gun aside*). It 's a fine one. It must have cost a good deal. Perhaps you bought it yourself abroad?

Sølvi. I did. (*Lays down the fern. To Ljot.*) If you have time, you can plant it to-morrow. It won't hurt it to lie overnight in the wet grass.

Einar (*goes to Sølvi*). How long were you abroad?

Sølvi. Seven years.

Einar. That 's a long time. (*Sits down.*)

Ljot. My father was angry with me for keeping your bird's skin.

Sølvi. Was he? And I was thinking of asking you to visit me at Hol some time before I leave.

Ljot. I hardly think I dare to.

Sølvi. You could take Einar with you. It is not much more than an hour's ride, and I have a number of things I should like to show you,—petrified tree-trunks that I have dug out of the earth, in which you can see plainly every bud

and shoot, and stone slabs with impressions of flowers and leaves that lived thousands of years ago. Should you like to see them?

Ljot. I should like it ever so much.

Sølvi. I have some rocks, too, baked by fire and furrowed by ice. If you knew all the tales they tell me! They lay bare to me things that are hidden from every one else. (*A whirring of wings is heard far away.*)

Einar (*stands up, pointing with his finger*). Look, there is a flock of ducks flying over the *hraun.* (*Stands gazing.*)

Sølvi (*in a low voice*). It made me so happy to see you. This evening, when the sun was setting, I reached out toward it. I did the same when I saw you.

Einar. They 're flying unusually low. There they alight —I'll get my gun.

Sølvi (*rising*). I'll lend you mine. (*Hands him the gun.*) It will carry a distance of a hundred and thirty feet.

Einar. What size shot have you?

Sølvi. Duck-shot.

Einar. Ljot, you don't mind, do you? I shall not be gone long. If they rise, I 'm not going after them. [*Exit.* (*Ljot rises.*)

Sølvi (*goes to her*). My star must be in the heavens to-night.

Ljot. You must not think that I was sitting up so late because I was waiting for you —I saw you walking over the *hraun*—but we shan't talk about that.

Sølvi. Shall I tell you why I came home from abroad? It was for your sake.

Ljot (*sits down*). That is not true.

Sølvi (*sits down*). One night, the last winter I was away, I must have been dreaming, but it seemed to me that I was

awake. I had come back home and was walking on the *hraun*. The *hraun* was covered with ashes. As I walked, I suddenly fell into a deep cleft and kept on falling and falling. At last I found myself lying on the bottom, unable to stir. Death came and sucked the life out of my eyes and held it in her hand like a tiny flame. Suddenly a woman stood beside me dressed in moss. She pleaded for me so long that death gave her my life. She looked like you. It was you. Don't you know that you hold my life in your hands? (*They rise.*)

Ljot. I think I shall go in. It is hard to tell when Einar will be back. When he is out hunting he forgets everything.

Sølvi. I love you, Ljot! You have not been out of my thoughts since the first time I saw you. Everything reminds me of you—the sun, the sky—

Ljot. I too have been happy in seeing you and talking with you. (*Stands still as death.*) This morning, right after you had gone, my father told me that on his way home from town he had seen his old friend,—and my father wanted me to promise myself to the son of his old friend, but I would not, because I was thinking of you. Then my mother came and talked to me—and I gave in. I could not do anything else.

Sølvi. Why did I not speak before! You won't feel hurt at what I say, Ljot? You must not let your parents decide your life. That is for you to do.

Ljot. You don't know my father. If he thought I was standing here talking to you, I can't tell what he would do.

Sølvi. I am convinced your parents have but one wish, and that is for your happiness.

Ljot. I don't know. My mother does not say much about

happiness; she does her duty—and I know mine. (*Turns toward the tent.*)

Sølvi. Are you going?

Ljot. It is better that we two should not meet again—it would only cause us suffering. (*Moves away.*)

Sølvi (*following her*). You don't realize what you are about to do! You will be committing a terrible crime—against all the wonderful days that life meant us two to have together. For you do care for me, Ljot, don't you? (*Ljot is silent.*) I thought you cared for me. When you spoke to me this morning you blushed, and I thought it was your heart that gave me its promise. The joy of it overwhelmed me.

Ljot. It matters little whom I care for. I have given my word.

Sølvi. You think it is your duty to keep your word, but there is another duty that is far greater, and that is to open your arms to happiness when it comes. There is no greater duty. It is the meaning of our existence. You must feel that, you who have grown like a flower out of the earth!

Ljot. It is not only that I have given my word. If I had neither father nor mother, I should break my promise, but I know that it would grieve my parents. This morning father said to me that it was the happiest day of his life since he got my mother, and I know it was true.

Sølvi. You must tell your parents that you cannot keep your word. You must do it for my sake. (*Kneeling.*) You are the only one I care for in all the world.

Ljot. I can't deal such a blow to my father. No other living being has been so good to me as my father.

Sølvi (*rising*). You do not care for me at all.

Ljot. You think it is easy for me! (*With tears in her eyes.*)

I own a spring—I cleanse it every Saturday. I have told it your name. (*Goes to the tent.*)

Sølvi. You are going! (*Turns away from Ljot, sits down on one of the rocks, covers his face.*)

Ljot (*stands silent for a long time, then goes over to him and takes his hands from his face*). I love you.

(*Sølvi takes her face between his hands and kisses her.*)

Enter Jakobina.

Jakobina (*coming slowly from the tent*). We are not all asleep in there.

(*Sølvi and Ljot rise.*)

Sølvi (*holding Ljot by the hand*). Let us go out on the *hraun* and look for Einar.

Ljot (*runs to Jakobina, puts her arms around Jakobina's neck and holds her close*). I know that you care for me. (*Goes to Sølvi and takes his hand.*) Come!

[*They go toward the "hraun."*

(*Jakobina stands still, following them with her eyes, then shakes her head and turns toward the tent.*)

ACT III

The farm-house is in ruins. Only the farther side of the "bad-stofa" is standing. It looks like a dark cavern. The servants have gathered near the wreckage; they are bare-headed, the men in their shirt-sleeves. Sveinungi is standing near the dark opening. It is night.

Sveinungi (*to Jon*). You dare not go in.

Jon (*peering into the gloom*). I don't know. There's only one post that holds the roof, and it may snap at any moment.

Sveinungi. It won't. It is drift-timber, which never rots.

Jon. And besides, it stands aslant; the slightest push would make it go with a crash, and there would be no getting out alive if the heavy roof came down.

Sveinungi. You are afraid. Is there anybody else who dares?

Jorunn. You cannot ask any man to go in there.

Sveinungi (*to Jon*). It would take you but a moment to bring out those few things. There's my tall chest—you know where it stands—and my old clock; you can unscrew it from the wall with your knife.

Jon. I am not going in there.

Sveinungi. Get drunk and brag—that you know how to do, all of you. (*Starts into the ruins.*)

Jon. Is master going in there?

Sveinungi. Do you think I will let my things be ruined, because you are a coward?

Jon. Then I will go with you. It 's easier for two.

[*Sveinungi and Jon disappear from view.*

Jorunn. No matter what happens to that man, he will never learn to bend. (*Goes to the ruins; looks in.*) Can you see anything in there? Is it not too dark?
(*Silence.*)

Sveinungi and Jon appear, carrying the tall chest.

Sveinungi. Indridi and you, Helgi, come here and take it from us. Set it over there.

[*Sveinungi and Jon disappear again.*

Indridi (*to Jorunn, as the men carry the chest out into the open*). Can we leave it here?

Jorunn. Yes. (*She peers into the ruins again.*)

Enter Jakobina from the direction of the tent.

Jakobina (*goes to Jorunn, lays her hand on Jorunn's shoulder*). I must feel that you are indeed safe and sound. (*Stroking her arm.*) When you went home, I was afraid that you would never come out of that house again. I thought your husband must be struck with blindness.

Jorunn. You don't know where Einar and Ljot have gone?

Jakobina. I saw Ljot going out on the *hraun.*

Sveinungi and Jon appear, carrying the clock.

Sveinungi. You will have to be a little careful, the glass is broken. (*Steps out into the open. To Jon.*) I dare say you have had enough of this.

Jon. I can't say it was any too cheerful in there.

Sveinungi (*to the men*). You can carry the clock into the tent; the dampness here might be bad for it. And you, Bjørg, go and get a blanket to spread over the chest.

[*Exeunt Servants, Bjørn running, Indridi and Helgi carrying the clock, Jakobina following them.*

Jorunn. You are lucky, Sveinungi, that you have not come to grief with your foolhardiness.

Sveinungi. It is nothing but my duty to care as best I can for what is mine. I have risked my life before in a good deal worse dangers than this. But I must send some one to look after the boy. He may have lost all the sheep. Will you go, Jon?

Jon. I will.

Sveinungi. You had better drive the sheep home.

Jorunn. And if you should see Ljot and Einar, tell them to hurry.

Jon. I will. [*Exit.*

Sveinungi. Where are they?

Jorunn. They are out on the *hraun.*

Enter Bjørg, carrying a blanket.

Bjørg. Here is the blanket.

Sveinungi. Why did they go out there? (*Takes the blanket, goes to the chest, and runs his hand over it.*) Here it 's been bruised. (*Throws the blanket over it.*) I did not think you would have all this to go through. (*Takes a long breath.*) It is pretty hard when one has grown as old as I am to see one's work destroyed.

Jorunn. That is true.

Sveinungi. My only comfort is that I shall have a capable man to help me put up the buildings again. (*Gazing over the "hraun."*) What can it be that is keeping Ljot out there? Has she been gone long?

Rannveig. I don't know.

Sveinungi. I hope she has not gone down into one of the fissures. One can't tell what may happen. The walls might cave in, or they might close overhead.

Enter Indridi from the direction of the tent.

Indridi. Einar and Ljot are coming now. We could see them from the tent.

Sveinungi. Are they coming? (*Goes toward the background.*) Yes, Ljot has seen us; she is running.

Þorunn. She must have thought we were buried under the ruins.

Sveinungi (*looking*). There is a third person with them. Who can it be?

Rannveig. So there is.

Indridi. I believe it 's Sølvi.

Sveinungi. What business has he out there at night?

Indridi. It 's hard to tell!

Sveinungi. I do hope that Ljot has not been talking to that fellow.

Enter Helgi from the direction of the tent.

(*Silence.*)

Enter Ljot, running.

Ljot (*puts her arms around her mother*). I was so frightened!

Þorunn. Were you frightened? You are quite out of breath with running.

Sveinungi (*smiling*). And have you no greeting for your father?

Ljot. Dear, dear father! (*Embraces him.*)

Sveinungi. You were glad when you saw us?

Ljot. I was so glad that I don't know yet what I am saying. I was afraid you had been caught under the ruins. I thought that was to be my punishment.

Sveinungi (*stroking her hair*). Have you done anything you should be punished for?

Ljot (*taking his hand*). Be fond of me, father! Be very, very fond of me!

Enter Einar and Sølvi.

Einar. Thank God, you are safe! Then you had time to get out?

Þorunn. No, we were in there.

Ljot. Were you in there? (*Goes to the ruins.*) How weird it looks!

Sveinungi (*goes to the ruins*). It is only the one post that holds it all. If that had snapped, you would never have laid eyes on us again.

Einar (*looks into the ruins*). It 's a miracle it did n't break.

Þorunn. Yes, if it had not been God's will, we should not be here now.

Einar (*turns from the ruins*). It was not any too cheerful out on the *hraun* either. The place seemed suddenly to have become alive.

Sveinungi. What in the world made you go out there?

Einar. There was a flock of ducks flying over the *hraun*, and I wanted to try a shot at them.

Sveinungi (*to Ljot*). And why did you go with him?

Ljot. I was not with him. Sølvi and I stayed behind.

Sveinungi. Do you sit alone with a stranger in the middle of the night? (*To Sølvi.*) And you, why are you here at this time? I will not have you go hunting on my land without asking my leave.

Sølvi. I was not hunting on your land.

Sveinungi. But you are picking up stones, and I forbid you to take as much as a single pebble from my land. Now you know that.

Ljot. Why do you say that, father?

Sveinungi. You can go into the tent, Ljot. You have nothing to do here.

Ljot. I have something to say to you.

Sveinungi. What is it? (*Ljot is silent. To the Servants.*) You can go. To-morrow I shall have a talk with you, Einar, which you will remember.

Einar. It was not my fault.

Sveinungi (*to the Servants*). Go! What are you waiting for? [*Exeunt Servants.*

Sveinungi (*to Ljot*). Now, what is it you have to say to me?

Sølvi. I have come here to ask for the hand of your daughter.

Sveinungi. Has not my daughter told you that she is betrothed?

Ljot. I have told him everything. I never cared for Halfdan—you know that, father, and I will not be his wife.

Þorunn. Ljot, it has never happened yet that one of my kin has broken faith. If you do it, you will be the first.

Sveinungi. And you have not reckoned with your father. It does not lie altogether with yourself to break your word. Do you think you can make a fool of me? (*To Sølvi.*) It does not make you my son-in-law that you have trifled with my daughter.

Sølvi. It was no mere chance that we two found each other. Only for Ljot's sake have I stayed so long in these parts. I came here to-night to find out how you had fared; I could not help it.

Sveinungi. You feel proud that you have coaxed a young girl to break her word. You think yourself very brave, and you have taken advantage of her when she was beside her-

self with fear. You have come like a thief in the dead of night.

Sølvi. I love your daughter. There is nothing wrong in that, and I am proud and happy that she has given me her heart.

Sveinungi (to Ljot). So that is what you have done. I dare say you have met him before and more than once behind my back.

Ljot. Not once.

Sveinungi. And straightway you are ready to break your word. You knew that Halfdan's father is the best friend I have.

Ljot. You must forgive me, father!

Sveinungi. And you knew I had sent him word that everything was settled.

Ljot (takes his hand). Do you remember, father, when I was so little that I had to put my arms around your knee? Then you never said no when I asked you for anything. I am still your little girl.

Sveinungi. Let me go!

Ljot. You do care for me, father. I know of no one who has been so good to me as you. You have given me everything that I call my own. You must give me my happiness!

Sveinungi. Let go my hand!

Jorunn. I understand that Sølvi is very dear to you, my child, but this comes upon us unawares, and it has been a terrible night for us all. (*To Sølvi.*) Could you not have waited before speaking to Sveinungi?

Sølvi. I cannot help it that it has come in this way. I would have waited if I could.

Jorunn. I might perhaps have seen my way to put in a good word for you two. (*To Sveinungi.*) You won't be hard

on your daughter! If we had been lying under the ruins now, she would have had no need to ask us. To-night we must not be merciless.

Sveinungi. Who is this man? I don't know him, nor do I know his people.

Sølvi. My father was a farmer like yourself. Had he been living, you two might have become friends.

Sveinungi (*interrupting*). The only thing I know about you is that you go about picking up stones like the children.

Sølvi. You speak slightingly of my stones, but the knowledge I gain from them can bring me more money than you ever made on your farm, and it can bring me fame.

Sveinungi. What kind of knowledge is that?

Sølvi. Those stones teach me to know my country and how it has been built by fire and water and ice. They give me an opportunity of finding out new links in laws that are eternal and mightier than all mankind.

Sveinungi. Indeed! Since you are so passing wise, you ought to have told me days ago that a great earthquake would come to-night. *That* I could have understood; but it seems that you knew as little there as the rest of us. I believe old Jakobina is wiser than you.

Sølvi. I don't know how wise she is, but I do know of people who go through life as if they were blind. They may have been living in the same place all their lives, and yet they have never seen the landscape they live with—neither its beauty nor its peculiar character.

Sveinungi. They have n't? (*Points toward the "hraun."*) I have been out there in a snowstorm so heavy that I could scarcely see a hand before me, and shall I tell you how I found my way? I knew where I was by feeling before me with my hands. (*Laughs.*) No, I have never seen the *hraun!*

Sølvi. I did not say that you were among the blind, and I am sure you are human enough not to force your daughter to marry against her will. It would not give you much joy to feel that you had made her unhappy for her whole life. If you think you do not know me well enough, you can find out all you wish from myself or from others.

Sveinungi. I have no desire to learn anything about you, and you need not worry about my daughter. She will stay here with me.

Sølvi. Ljot is not a child any longer. She can decide for herself.

Sveinungi. Perhaps you think she can't live without you. (*To Ljot.*) If you care as much for him as he imagines, I will let you prove it. I will let you choose between him and me. If you choose him, then I have no daughter any more.

Ljot. You don't mean to force me to such a choice!

Sveinungi. Can you for a single moment be in doubt about whom to choose of us two—him or your old father?

Ljot (*kneeling*). He is so unutterably dear to me.

Sveinungi. Get up! I don't want to see you lying like a dog at my feet.

Ljot (*rising*). Then you have no daughter.

Sølvi. I knew you would not fail me!

Jorunn. You had better give your consent, Sveinungi, since it cannot be otherwise. I cannot do without my only child.

Sveinungi (*goes to Ljot*). You are quite free, Ljot; I will not try to force you, but when you have thought it over, you will not leave your father and mother for the sake of a stranger. You are my only child, and you have been the light of my eyes since you were a little tot. When I came home from work I was never too tired to listen to what

you had to say. When you stroked my cheek it was like warm summer rain falling on my face. It will be lonely and empty here if you go. You cannot do it.

Ljot. Father, it is you who drive me away.

Sveinungi. You must listen to me. It has always been my intention that you should take the farm, and yesterday when you promised to marry Halfdan it seemed to me that all my wishes had been fulfilled. I was happy, and not only for your sake, but fully as much for the farm. Yet you would leave it now in the midst of misfortune. Look about you! Not a single building is standing. Can you let your old father sit here alone and forsaken? You might as well kill your father. And for whom should I build it up again if you are not to have it? It might as well be left to rot on the ground.

Ljot. You don't know, father, how much I care for him. I used to dream often that the mountains fell so that I could see the land beyond. To-night it seemed to me that the mountains fell.

Sveinungi. You are a wilful girl. (*To Sølvi.*) Could you think of taking over my farm, perhaps?

Sølvi. I could not—

Sveinungi (*interrupting*). Do you two believe that you can cow me? (*Pointing to the ruins.*) There is a chest of drawers in there that Ljot keeps her clothes in. I will have nothing of hers in my house. (*To Sølvi.*) Will you go in there with me and bring it out?

Sølvi. I have nothing to do in there.

Sveinungi. You can go, Ljot. I can't bear to see you. (*Goes over to the ruins; stands resting his hands on the walls.*)

Sølvi (*takes Ljot by the hand quietly*). It is better that we leave your parents alone for a little while. [*Exeunt.*

Jorunn. You will have to give your consent, Sveinungi. You say yourself that all you have done has been for your daughter.

Sveinungi (*turns to Jorunn, passing his earth-stained hand over his forehead*). Did you understand what I was about to do? I wanted to get him into the ruins, and then I meant to give the post a shove.

Jorunn. God forgive you, man!

Sveinungi. Now we two must hold together. If we two are of one mind, I believe Ljot will give in. You must try to bring her to her senses.

Jorunn. They are very fond of each other. It warmed my heart to see them. It brought back the days of my own youth. I feel sure it would be a sin to try to part those two.

Sveinungi. And you say that!

Jorunn. I think it was her fate to meet this man. She has always been a good and dutiful daughter.

Sveinungi. And it was you who went with me into the house! Have you turned against me—you too?

Jorunn (*goes to him*). You must not make the evil worse than it really is. The man looks as if he came of good people, and we have every reason to believe that he is a capable man. Even if we can't keep Ljot here, as we had hoped to do, she will certainly find time to come and see us once in a while, and we shall have that to look forward to.

Sveinungi. You think only of your daughter. It is nothing to you if my life-work is wasted. I could name you many farms that have been an ornament to the neighborhood as long as they have been handed down from man to man in the same family, but once they have passed into other hands, they have been tended in a makeshift way or left to go to rack and ruin altogether. You have seen those

old forlorn places, where the site is overgrown with grass, and the heather has been allowed to spread all over the yard. They remind me of graves. I tell you the truth: if such a fate were in store for my farm, I should wish for nothing but to be lying under the ruins myself.

Þorunn. Who says that your farm will not be rebuilt! You are not so old that you cannot do it without help. If I know you rightly, you always grow younger and stronger whenever there is anything that needs all your powers. In a year or two you will have the buildings up again every bit as fine as before.

Sveinungi. Spare your wheedling! What would be the use, even though I got the houses up again? When my days are over, everything will pass into the hands of careless people. And to think that this should happen only because of a fleeting fancy!

Þorunn. Did it seem to you like a passing whim when Ljot was begging for your consent? To me it seemed that she was pleading for her life.

Sveinungi. Even though this should mean more to my daughter than I think it does, that can alter nothing. It is my right to care for my home and keep it intact even after I am gone. When I am standing out in the *hraun* and looking toward home, the green yard looks like a spot of sunshine.

Þorunn. You take it for granted that none of your kin will ever reap the benefit of your work, but your daughter is not dead, though she has chosen another man than the one you wanted her to marry. Why should not those two have children? They are both strong and healthy, and there is, after all, a chance that some day one of their sons may take over the farm.

Sveinungi. I dare say a son of his would be the right man!

Jorunn. A daughter's son is often more like his grandfather than his father. You know that as well as I.

Sveinungi. You are like a child playing with soap-bubbles. When one breaks, you are straightway ready to blow a new one. You can't make me play at that game. Even though they should have children, do I know how they would turn out? And you see it the same way yourself, but you are trying to fool me into giving my consent.

Jorunn. What do you gain even if you have your way and part those two? You may bring it about that your daughter becomes one of those sour old maids; for you cannot mean to drag her to the altar against her will.

Sveinungi. I didn't expect you to be against me. You wouldn't mind leaving the farm, if you could live with your daughter. You care more for her than for me.

Jorunn (*her voice growing husky*). Why do you say this, Sveinungi? I have never weighed my feelings for you two, nor do I intend to do it. I only know that where you are, there I stay too.

Sveinungi. Even this very earth upon my hand is dear to me. I care for it as the old house-leek would if she could feel. As for the young man whom you think so much of, I should have grudged him even to have the earth fall on his face. But you were not born here, as I was. You have not lived here as a child. You are an outsider.

Jorunn. Am I an outsider! I am grown too old to kneel before you as your daughter did, but if you send her away, I know that even though you build your house both larger and finer, the room will seem less light to me, and the smile will be gone from my face. Can you not spare me the sorrow of losing my only child?

Sveinungi. I thought you knew me well enough not to tease me with bootless prayers. What I have said stands.

Jorunn. I don't know what gives you the right to be so heartless. You were tempting God when you went into the house, but He had mercy on you and spared your life, and the very first thing you do is an act of cruelty. (*Bursts out sobbing.*)

Sveinungi. Don't take to crying, wife.

Jorunn (*weeping; sits down on one of the stones that have been torn from the wall by the earthquake*). I don't see how I am going to live through it if you send her away.

Sveinungi (*stands puzzled for a moment, then goes to her*). I understand that you take this very much to heart. Do go into the tent now and lie down. We must try to get over this as best we can.

Jorunn (*rising*). I am sure I have lost my daughter forever. (*Weeps.*)

Sveinungi (*takes her hands and kisses her on the cheek*). I have always said good night to you with a kiss. You have been a good wife to me. I little thought, when you went with me into the house, that you should cry yourself to sleep this very night because of me. (*Jorunn clings to him, weeping. Sveinungi releases himself suddenly.*) Listen to what I say. You shall not leave me this way. Now you can go to the young folks and tell them that I give my consent. (*Moves a little away.*) But it will be on one strict condition. (*Jorunn wipes her eyes on her apron.*) They must promise me that if they have a son, he shall be brought up here with us.

Jorunn (*her face lighting up*). I believe this thought was sent you by Him who showed mercy upon you this night.

Sveinungi. Even if it should be their only child. (*Goes*

to Jorunn.) And you can tell them that it is only for your sake I yield. Now you won't cry any more?

Jorunn. God bless you! How happy Ljot will be! (*Turns to go.*)

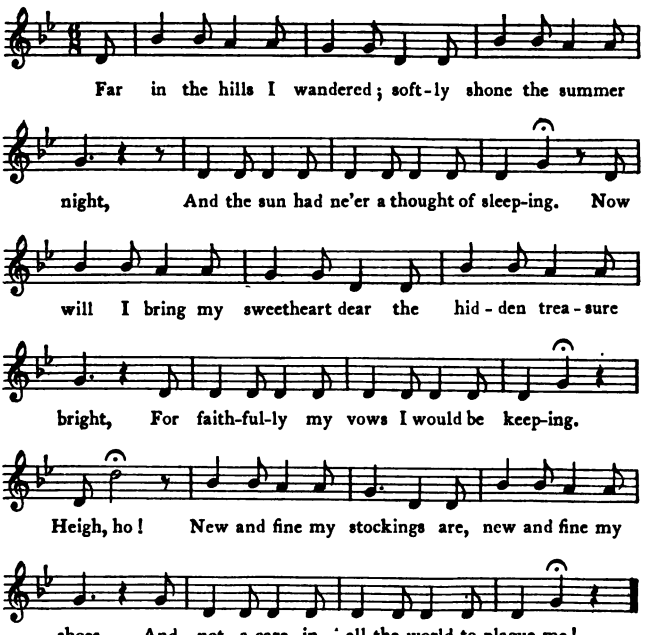
Sveinungi. You need n't be in such a hurry. I don't care to have the young folks see that you have been crying. And one thing more; Sølvi must not come here until I send him word. I want to explain to my old friend how all this has come about.

Jorunn. Sølvi will understand. (*Sits down, very still, with her hands in her lap, gazing straight before her.*) And the boy is to be named Sveinungi. (*Unconsciously she passes her right hand back and forth over the edge of the stones.*)

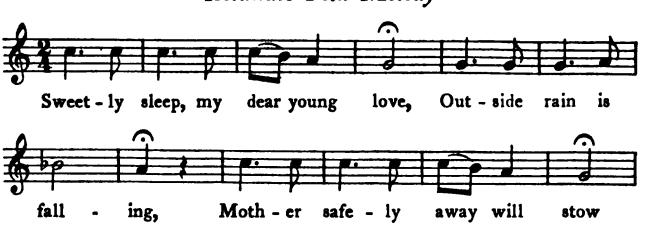
Sveinungi. Yes, they can well be used again, the old stones. Now you had better go to Ljot.

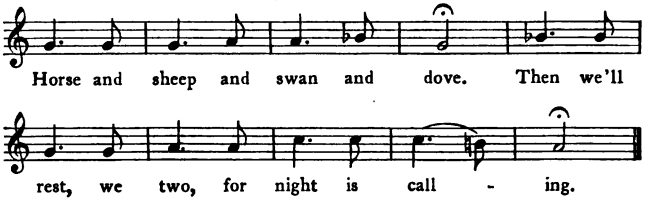
Jorunn (*rising, pats his arm*). Yes, yes, I am going, and I am happy. [*Exit.*

(*Sveinungi stands for a moment looking after her, then bends down over the stones, examining them closely. He turns over one stone—and one more—*)

Kari's Song

Far in the hills I wandered; soft-ly shone the summer
night, And the sun had ne'er a thought of sleep-ing. Now
will I bring my sweetheart dear the hid-den trea-sure
bright, For faith-ful-ly my vows I would be keep-ing.
Heigh, ho! New and fine my stockings are, new and fine my
shoes, And not a care in all the world to plague me!

Icelandic Folk Melody





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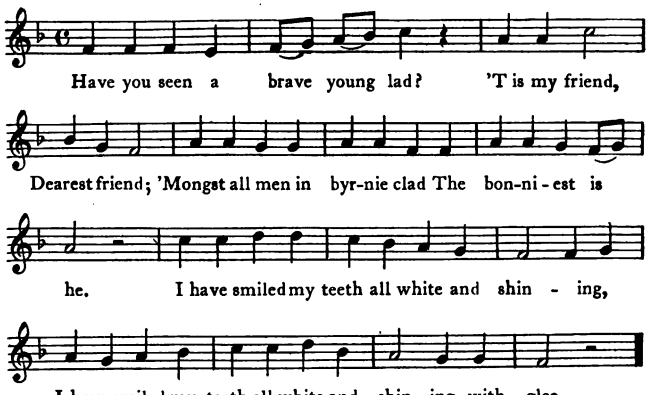
Have you seen a brave young lad? 'T is my friend,
Dearest friend; 'Mongst all men in byr-nie clad The bon-ni - est is
he. I have smiled my teeth all white and shin - ing,
I have smiled my teeth all white and shin - ing with glee.

NOTE: *The Editors are responsible for the translation of the lyrics.*

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